

# disques

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1931

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# disques

## FOR APRIL 1931

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# disques

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VOL. II

APRIL, 1931

No. 2

“PHONOGRAPH records! Who buys phonograph records? I didn’t know they made them any more. I haven’t played my phonograph for years.” Such remarks we hear quite often from the man-in-the-street. And when we tell him that more good music has been engraved on the discs in the last twelve months than in any like period, he just looks amazed and says nothing. He just can’t understand it. And then we hear from another that he was very much interested in recorded *music* and that years ago he made a wonderful phonograph with a reproducer with an oiled paper diaphragm with which he used glass needles. He is not interested in *music* any more, he explains, he is experimenting with television. When we tell him that reproducing instruments are now available that are so far superior to the instruments that he knew that there is no comparison, he just shrugs his shoulders and retorts that he has gone in for television.



It might be interesting to consider just who are interested in records. The most important group are those

who are actually musically intelligent. Composers, instructors, professional artists and students largely make up this group, and from a check which we have made of the records most in demand by these collectors we find that they are interested in only the very highest type of music. We venture the assertion that the musical intelligence quotient of this group of record buyers is higher by a very marked degree than of any other class of those who are interested in the art. We are very sure that they are on a much higher musical plane than the subscribers to the opera for instance. Very few record collectors of our acquaintance could sit through some of the performances over which opera audiences go into raptures—*The Girl of the Golden West*, *Lucia* and the like. Even beautiful women in finest array and the knowledge that they are mingling with the *élite* could not bring them to tolerate such music.



The quotient of the groups who make up the chamber music and symphony audiences is lowered by the large number who attend because they think it is the thing to do. Very few



of this class will be found among the record collectors. There is very little of the spectacular in buying records and playing them in the privacy of one's home. Attending symphony concerts is a much better way to impress a larger number of our neighbors with the fact that we are patrons of the arts. It is our hope that the directors of the various recording studios will take cognizance of the fact that they are catering to a group whose musical intelligence is of the highest order and that they will be guided accordingly in selecting compositions for recording. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to record anything that would be "over the heads" of the present day collectors.



Several articles which we have included in recent issues of *Disques* have brought some scorching letters from our readers. As far as space will permit we shall publish them in our Correspondence Column. Proper conclusions can best be reached with the varying thoughts of the many to guide us. May we call our friends' attention to the fact that we do not necessarily agree with the opinions of our contributors? To agree with all would, of course, be utterly impossible. In most cases our articles are written by those whose reputation is a matter of record—whose integrity is unquestioned. Their opinions may or may not be correct but they are certainly worthy of serious consideration. Our fundamental aim is to promote the appreciation of music, and we offer our readers the thoughts of many of the outstanding writers on the subject.



We have in preparation several articles which may seem startling. They are, however, the mature opinions of their authors and will be offered to our readers as such. Never in any case will we publish an article simply because it is provocative. To do so is in our opinion the cheapest type of journalism. The article must tend to inspire serious thought on the subject at hand or it will not find its way into our columns. The conclusions drawn are the responsibility of our contributors. The opinions of our readers are most valuable and welcome and will be printed whenever it is possible to do so.



J. F. BROUGHTON PORTE, who contributes an article on Sir Edward Elgar to this issue, was born in London, England, where he now lives. The author of many books on musical subjects, including *Edward MacDowell: A Great American Tone Poet*, *Some Famous Symphonies*, and studies of Sir Edward Elgar (he has lately prepared a new edition of this work, which will be published shortly) and Sir Charles Stanford, Mr. Porte has contributed to practically every musical magazine, as well as to many literary journals, in England. His work has also appeared in many American musical magazines. Mr. Porte has long been a staunch advocate of American music in England, and has written many articles on the subject, among them "Deems Taylor—An American Hope," which appeared in the *Sackbut*, London, in 1929. He was one of the first to realize the value of the phonograph, and his articles have appeared in most of the English gramophone magazines and papers. From May, 1928, to October, 1929, he was editor of the *Gramophone Review*, London. For the past several years he has been the gramophone critic to the *Chesterian*. Until recently Mr. Porte's writings have appeared under the name of

"John F. Porte," but for family reasons he has made use of a third Christian name, and henceforth his work will appear under the name of "J. F. Broughton Porte."



DOROTHY E. NICHOLS, whose article, "At Least One Hour," appears in this issue, sends in the following autobiographical note: "I am an enthusiast for the Machine Age. Having started my career as a music reviewer on the local paper, I was laid low by a germ that made it impossible to continue. Since I could not go to the mountain, the mountain, by way of the radio and phonograph, came to me. I started a circulating record club which made a wealth of music accessible to a poor author, and am at present an Ardent Listener. My first publication was in *Theatre Magazine*, and *Theatre Guild Magazine* has just taken an article on radio plays. I came to California from Colorado, where I was born in 1902, and since then have once gone as far East as Nevada." Miss Nichols lives at present at Palo Alto, California.



Among the articles scheduled for early publication in *Disques* are: Koussevitzky (Isaac Goldberg); Serge Prokofiev (Nicolas Slonimsky); the Beethoven quartets (Joseph Cottler); future developments in electrical reproduction (Charles Weyl); a survey of modern German music (Herbert F. Peyser); Berlioz (Laurence Powell); Falla's Harpsichord Concerto, *Amor Brujo* and *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (Joseph Cottler).

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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#### CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.



## Elgar

By J. F. BROUGHTON PORTE

The once popular description of Elgar as "England's greatest living composer" has proved itself a damaging nuisance, chiefly because it stuck with all the limitations of such a classification. Firstly, we must dispense with the word "living," because Henry Purcell, although he did some fine work, died young, and it is unfair to make a probable reputation obscure the claim of superiority of a later composer who develops to his fullest capacity. But it is stupid to refer to Elgar even as "England's greatest composer," for it means nothing. Where are the others? Not the little fry, surely; they are not worth comparing with him, although quite interesting figures alone. Delius? Well, his type of work and mentality are so different from Elgar's that no satisfactory result can come from placing the two men in competition. The time has come when we must place Elgar as an international figure. His living in an insular island has held back world appreciation for too long.

The story of Elgar in England is that of a vicious circle, with certain depressing additional factors. He has been always up against the mountains of imported stagnation which created a public incapable of thinking for itself. Everything was left to foreigners, fame being made abroad and merely brought to England for endorsement, and profit. Elgar made little headway at home until Richard Strauss shook up the English by acclaiming *The Dream of Gerontius* and Hans Richter tramped round England playing the *Enigma Variations*. Strauss cannot keep telling the English about Elgar (although Bernard Shaw has taken his place), and Richter is dead. More than once has Elgar rather sardonically referred to his being an English composer.

After the European War there came a fashion in British music and along came the new hopes. Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax, Eugène Goossens, Gustav Holst, John Ireland, and so on, all good men, but not quite great composers. We still get a few extra ripples from this enthusiastic new dawn. Arthur Bliss, Constant Lambert, and so on, interesting men, nice experimenters, fashionable, and all the rest of it, but hardly great composers. The sad point is that we missed the one big man and, not content with this, began saying that he belonged to an older generation.

The elbowing Elgar away by younger men came last year to a quaint reaction. At the series of British Broadcasting Corporation Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall, London, under Sir Henry J. Wood, one night each week was devoted to British Composers. A Charles Dickens or a Mark Twain must have drawn up the programs, with a desire for justice and a twinkle in his eye. More large Elgar works than ever before in one season were featured. The two symphonies, two concerti, the *Falstaff* Symphonic Study, the *Enigma Variations*, were spread out among works by other British composers. Result: Elgar at once rose high above all the new hopes and left them as pigmies. Said an article by W. S. Orr in *The Musical Times*, concerning the British Composers programs: ". . . it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that Elgar has shown himself like some 'sea-shouldering whale' among the little dolphins and porpoises who have floundered uncomfortably in his immense wake."

I have lost patience with the international musicians who have not recognized Elgar as one of the great composers, because I think that his existence has been the



means of exposing a good deal of their bluff as arbiters of the art. This applies to German conductors especially, for according to the claims on behalf of their country's musical perspicacity there should have been no difficulty in noticing Elgar (to be quite fair, I must not forget that there have been two German musicians, Richter and Strauss, who substantiated their country's musical intelligence by picking out Elgar quite early in his career). I fear, however, that the tastes and experience of German musicians do not stray far from home, except in cases where the public firmly demands some Latin or Slav composers. German musical leadership consists mainly of trailing the more or less German classics, and Anglo-Saxon tastes have been molded upon these lines.

## II

On one score we may admit the possibility of Elgar not being internationally appreciated in the fullest sense. Unconsciously he is essentially English without ever being associated with nationalism or folk tunes. Mr. Ernest Newman has truly intimated that Elgar's mind flowered from the thousand years of English literature, and the foreigner who has not dipped deeply into Chaucer or tramped over the Malvern Hills may not be able to read Elgar in the original.

There is something English about Elgar that at long last is binding his countrymen to him and making him a beloved figure. (In 1932 a big Elgar Festival is planned to celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday.) He seems able to express all that we feel, but, like him, cannot, or do not, label. The foreigner cannot follow this as he can the Russian picturesqueness of even the non-nationalists, Tschaikowsky and Rachmaninoff. Toscanini showed us his idea of Elgar in the *Enigma Variations*, in which he conducted the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra in London. It was not our idea of the music; in fact, it was not Elgar at all as we know him; but allowance must be made for even Toscanini's scant knowledge of England.

Elgar abroad, however, should be recognized for his universality, even if his Englishness is missed because of its strangeness. He would be best expounded by his countrymen, however, because they are more likely to bring out his qualities, which many foreigners may have the chance of finding are quite lovable. Foreign conductors, being rather up a tree when trying to interpret the great Englishman, have to make the best of the position by translating him into the idioms of Brahms, or Wagner, or Strauss. When Basil Cameron, an Englishman, conducted a recent San Francisco orchestral season, I was pleasantly astonished to be told that two works which gained particular ovations were a Sibelius suite and Elgar's Introduction and Allegro for Strings. There is hope for American musical discretion if it breaks away from reaction, avoids sensation, and gets down to honest applauding of good unfamiliar music from wherever it comes. There are two excellent H. M. V. records of the Introduction and Allegro for Strings played by John Barbirolli's Chamber Orchestra. I recommend them to American gramophonists who want a practical illustration of my point about Elgar's Englishness, in addition to his natural healthiness and immense vitality coupled with extreme sensitiveness. As a matter of fact, this particular piece was conceived in the atmosphere of the Malvern Hills.

### III

The initial understanding of Elgar must come from an acknowledgment of him as an entirely individual and distinct composer. It has been amusing to notice the attempts to place him. On the one hand, we found people trying to reconcile him with Wagner, because he used "leading-motives" in *The Dream of Gerontius*. On the other hand, he was reckoned as coming from Brahms, because he wrote symphonic music in the "absolute" form. The Elgar-Brahms party seemed to make the strongest case. It is pathetic to note how their view gained ground—pathetic because of its unwitting exposure of the feeble logic of popular musical appreciation. There are no two minds in music so utterly different as those of Brahms and Elgar. Where Brahms hammers out his work into a great logical structure, Elgar unfolds his experiences as he proceeds. The process of a Brahms symphony is logical and unanswerable; that of an Elgar symphony is swayed by feelings and reflections. Emotionally, we can feel confident in the outcome of the Brahms; in the Elgar we live on hope, as it were, and, for those who know him deeply, faith in the outcome of his faith.

Faith, in an entirely personal aspect, is the root power of all Elgar's music. I do not claim this as the very best way of describing the most potent reflection of his mentality, but shall use it as perhaps at least an adequate explanation. In all of his music there will be found an upward urge and a curiously cheerful self-confidence. It is not a mere striving, for this man never doubts his faith. Some people do not believe entirely in "the Music is the Man," but Elgar seems to prove it in his case. The well-preserved man of seventy-three years, with behind him a long and tenacious battle with neglect, who would conduct from a chair rather than let lumbago beat him; the man who at over seventy years could write a new *Pomp and Circumstance* March (No. 5) showing the same vigor and spirit as that (No. 1) written nearly forty years previously: this is the man we find in his symphonies, concerti, and chamber music, with their constant general suggestion of a mental process that always inevitably moves in the ascendent.

The musical development of Elgar has been built on a life-long theme of personal faith and driven by a seemingly inexhaustible vitality used as tenacity and perseverance. A study of his works must inevitably reveal that continuous upward urge, and this, to those who take the easy step of becoming Elgar enthusiasts, becomes positively uplifting. Notice that in all of Elgar's works there is never a trace of personal morbidity or despair. It is true that he may express the truth that such things exist and have touched him, but he only writes as an observer or a recorder. He is constantly fortified by an inherent vitality and again and again rises up with his personal faith. A happy inspiration made him adopt for his own the musical direction, *Nobilmente*, which has become synonymous with an Elgar work.

Let us examine the two symphonies. No. 2 in E Flat has been already issued for the gramophone, and No. 1 in A Flat will be issued. In these works we find a large range of life experience. Elgar writes from within as he goes along, and this may explain the rather wandering impression that is given to some hearers; but take the works as a whole and notice how difficult it is to resist the upward urge that is continually chaffing under passing expressions of dark forces or even of wistful tenderness. The Symphony in A Flat ends upon a note of triumph, but it is real,



not merely formal. The Symphony in E Flat (*Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight*) ends in a mood of wistful reflection, but note that there is no vestige of despair.

#### IV

The motive of faith in the whole of Elgar's music is perhaps the noblest exposition of a personal leading-motive since Bach, his spiritual brother. It is inherent, not formal, and sustained by immense tenacity. Elsewhere I have described it as his always Ascendent Spirituality.

The main contrast to Elgar's faith is his strong leaning towards wistful tenderness and sentiment. In this way he speaks as a poet; and note that, in small or large works, there is always the natural antidote of some broad and healthy tune. Elgar's music is spiritually so frank as to be perhaps almost obvious. Cutting aside the wandering varieties expressing thoughts and experiences in the larger works, we find the two main aspects of tender sentiment and broad vitality very simply stated. His music can never take up a position among the more fragrant and misty tone-poetry. He is unable to be dreaming for long, but wants to get out into the open and before he can stop it, along comes one of those big, broad, healthy tunes that have at last made him so loved by his countrymen. I think that it makes him still more human when he shows that, despite this bold, almost brazen, vitality, he can also write most tenderly and exquisitely. Note the contrasts in the *Enigma Variations*. Here they are detached and in miniature, making excellent elementary ground for the study of Elgar.

In the Violoncello Concerto in E Minor (H. M. V. records by Beatrice Harrison with the composer conducting; Columbia records by W. H. Squire and Hallé Orchestra) we find the summit of Elgar's philosophy. In grave and mellowed accents, with a stern discarding of all but essentials, we find him summing up a whole life-time of experience. How speaking is that utterly moving *Adagio*, and that placid mellowness of the first movement; and later the strong-minded Finale. Over the whole presides the grave, motto-like recurring *recitative*.

There is one notable exception to Elgar's custom of writing music without literary definition. This is the Symphonic Study, *Falstaff*, where he aims at giving a musical study of Shakespeare's Sir John Falstaff (of the historical plays, not the inferior, but more popular, buffoon of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*). Some Elgar enthusiasts consider this as his greatest orchestral work. The *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches should not be lightly regarded, for they show the bold, outdoor vitality of Elgar without its usual partner of tender feelings. Some people cannot abide the broad, brazen tunes of *Pomp and Circumstance* and of the *Cockaigne* Overture. One can admit that democratic frankness may irritate "superior" folk who have strict ideas as to the bearing of a great composer, but I personally think that he is a poor fish who cannot feel the glorious urge of, say, the No. 5 March. Such cheery energy, sweeping along, from a man of seventy-three years must really make the energetic young folk look to their laurels.

Elgar as a master of orchestration serves the gramophone well, especially for those who love the thrill of a big orchestra. In this department he is, I think, unrivalled, largely because of his independent handling of the parts, avoiding the doubling methods of Richard Strauss, his nearest rival. An Elgar score asks for

keen hearing, for there is so much going on; but it is no mere mass of sound. None of his effects are merely novel, and he seems to have invented nothing new, and yet his orchestra soars like some great bird over the heads of all the experimenters and sensationalists.

Despite all the advances, excitements, new apostles, and public favorites, if we ruthlessly cast aside prejudices and pre-conceived notions, Elgar is the greatest composer of our day. With him I would associate Sibelius and Richard Strauss. These three, alone, I think, show that there can still be individual and original figures in creative music who can rise above belonging to any school, dispense with the idea of doing something new (Strauss has long since got above that), and write music that has that universal humanity which is the stamp of great art.

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#### ELGAR RECORDS

*Cockaigne* Overture. Four sides. Royal Albert Hall Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar. Two 12-inch discs (V-D1110 and V-D1111). \$2 each.

*Symphony No. 2* in E Flat, Op. 63. Twelve sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar. Six 12-inch discs (V-D1230 to V-D1235). \$12.

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*Pomp and Circumstance* Marches Nos. 1 and 2. Two sides. Royal Albert Hall Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar. One 12-inch disc (V-9016). \$1.50.

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*Wand of Youth* Suite No. 2. Four sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar. Two 12-inch discs (V-9594 and V-9595). \$1.50 each.

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*Concerto* for Violoncello and Orchestra, Op. 85. Six sides. Beatrice Harrison ('Cello) and New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar. Three 12-inch discs (V-D1507 to V-D1509). \$2 each.

*Introduction and Allegro* for Strings, Op. 47. Four sides. John Barbirolli's Chamber Orchestra. Two 12-inch discs (V-C1694 and V-C1695). \$1.75 each.

*Dream of Gerontius*. Eight sides. Royal Choral Society, Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, Three Choirs Festival Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra and Soloists conducted by Edward Elgar. Four 12-inch discs (V-D1242 and V-D1243 and V-D1348 and V-D1350). \$2 each.

(See also *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia*)



## Tonal Imagery

By JOSEPH COTTLER

### *Strawinsky's "Nightingale"*\*

When a man has lost his faith, or has none to lose, he seeks distraction. Existence becomes a problem in practical routine, simple tasks, and relish of the passing show. The cure is to live extensively and be conscious only on the low level of description. That way, there is a chance of spying something worth holding to, a chance of finding a new faith.

So it is with all self-conscious organisms. When the physical sciences are low on principles, they proceed by collecting data until a coherent body arises and ripens into metaphysics and religion. With music the case is the same. When the ideal of harmonic development—the setting up of thematic material and letting it saw wood—was renounced, the recent era of tonal experiment began. Color was the one saving value to hold to. New rhythms came to be exploited and sonority was tried for its own sake. The old instrumentation of Brahms and Schumann, which divided the orchestra into sections, went out decisively as the shadow of Wagner lengthened.

Meanwhile the rhythm of growth and decay, if it does nothing else, refines the descriptive faculty. And so membership in the orchestra was extended to saxophones and sirens, guttersnipes who took their places beside the ancient strings and noble horns. Mozart's orchestra became riotous with flutter-tones from the winds, simultaneous plucking and bowing from the strings, glissandi from the trombones, clicking of keys from the valved horns. Henceforth the orchestra must be a unit flexible enough to reproduce any tonal sensation whatever.

But what to build out of this lavish material? As descriptive technique it could at least beg the question and mimic—it could make faces and impersonate real if not ideal sound. Such music could yield to the maximum only in solution with other depictive arts, painting and dancing, and I wonder if we haven't in our day produced the finest and most abundant ballets in history. Presiding at this scenic sound was a talent of the first order, Igor Strawinsky, who turned to musical jobbing with sensational success. To him it made little difference whether the commission was for an old Russian legend, a Chinese fairy-tale, or a puppet drama, the setting was in every case a form of pure rhythms and tone colors. . . . value is change. As for melody, now that voice leading was irrelevant, what more appealing to the public than a folk song or two recurring as themes? Well, and if the whole is a bit mechanized, the reason is that expression is above everything else a practical problem. The show's the thing. And if you aren't satisfied, neither is Strawinsky. Diaghilev is dead, Strawinsky has disbanded his immense orchestra and turned to narrower, shadier paths. (*Reynard, The Soldier's Tale*, etc.) The old Strawinsky has disappeared and Schönberg may gloat, for the new Strawinsky has joined the pack of avatar hunters. (Piano Concerto, *Oedipus Rex*, *Apollon Musagete*.) Perhaps this, too, is a practical affair with Strawinsky.

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\**Song of the Nightingale Suite*: Chinese March (Igor Strawinsky) Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc (V-D1932). \$2.

If the show is over, while it lasted at any rate, it was fascinating folly. For where the descriptive mentality is at its best, the product is bound to be charmingly exotic. The greenest hill is the farthest hill. The white race goes in for Negro art. Rich people go slumming. The West realizes that it is not the only point on the compass. Imagist poets translate from the Chinese, and Strawinsky and Diaghilev, too, put on the *Nightingale*.

It is generally accounted the least satisfactory work of Strawinsky. He, himself, having interrupted it to do *Petrouchka*, went back to it with distaste. It seems to have oscillated between ballet and opera and has ended by being really neither. But out of it, Strawinsky, as has been his practice with all his stage works, has arranged an orchestral suite. Despite the criticism against it, the *Nightingale* contains some of the most characteristic and colorful music of that phase of his career. The *Chinese March* is an instance.

The exotic, of course, when it is handled in the best taste and with point, is the comic, because the descriptive type of thought cannot evoke tragedy which is an inner force, thematic development. The white race confers its stamp of approval on African art. Slummers think it is a shame that the slummed haven't the finer things of life. The professional Indian seer does a good Ethical Culture business in New York, and his audience, convinced of self-effacement on Sunday, is full of pep talk on Monday. It is all an admirable comedy of manners.

Strawinsky's job was not therefore to penetrate Chinese life. He seasons his score with the pentatonic scale, but it is no more Chinese than is Chopin's Etude on the Black Keys. The pentatonic scale is just one of the details in his scheme of caricature, of mechanization; the "no checkee, no washee" gag. As caricature it is highly successful. And as orchestra it is an example of what Strawinsky's fame will rest upon. He seems to have a command of all the variations and shades of tones; to have made the spectrum continuous. Like a good cook, he mystifies you with his ingredients, so that the ear can hardly analyze the constituents of his score. Harmonically and rhythmically there is no rest. The colors play in ceaseless figurations like boardwalk displays in the ocean. The chatter of the woodwinds, the dignity of the trumpets rendered pompous with piccolis, the ceremonious decorum of the trombone that collapses in a most lugubrious glissando, the mincing strings, the tinkling celesta, and the theme which manages to groan out when least expected, the cross-rhythms and the high pitched tonal activity with its glitter and verve—it is wonderful how, like a colony of ants on a Summer day, the figures do all manage to get about in such a swarm—make delicious fun, while Strawinsky's attitude throughout is that of the magician who conjures up the scene with pitiless irony.

### *"Pictures at an Exhibition"*\*

Like Strawinsky, Moussorgsky protested against what he called "musical mathematics." With him the descriptive power of art became a creed. "To be in touch with life at close quarters," he wrote shortly after the composition of his Suite for

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\**Pictures at an Exhibition*. (Moussorgsky-Ravel) Seven sides and *Sarabande*. (Debussy-Ravel) One side. Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Four 12-inch discs (V-7372 to V-7375) in album. Victor Set M-102. \$8.



Piano: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, "that is my heaven." And elsewhere: "The characteristic features of individuals and of masses . . . there lies the true duty of the artist." Those features, moreover, can be suggested only rhythmically, and Moussorgsky's attempt to make tempo elastic enough to fit folk rhythms is evidenced by his frequent change of tempo-signature. More particularly, like Strawinsky, after him, he sought those features in folk songs. But unlike Strawinsky, he was deeply sympathetic with his subject matter and became emotionally a part of it. Strawinsky is the ironic artist whereas Moussorgsky is still saturated with the romantic elements of those musicians he so admired—Beethoven and Schumann. The result is that he is frequently guilty of the sin that Strawinsky seems to fear even too much, that of sentimentality. The picture called the *Old Castle*, which is little more than a cheap tune reeking with melancholy, is an instance. Ravel rightly gives it to a saxophone to croon. The *Tuilleries*, again, is ballet music on the order of Delibes. But despite an occasional lapse, these ten pictures, steeped in the folkways of Russia, are delightful vignettes. Moussorgsky's must have been a naïve, untroubled soul to write with such clarity and freshness.

Considering the character of the work, Ravel was well chosen to do the orchestration. His command of the orchestra is nearer the old treatment of groups of tones which he keeps distinct or interweaves, rather than blends as Strawinsky does. But the principal distinction between Ravel and Strawinsky, as masters of the orchestra, is that the former uses instruments in their most appealing registers so that the result is full, rich and overpoweringly sensuous; while the latter (hear the *Chinese March*) is interested in the macabre tone quality residual in any instrument—the thin windy register of the flute, the raucous blare of the trumpet, the tinkle of the piano. But perhaps it all comes down to a difference in temperament. As descriptive artists, Ravel and Moussorgsky see the ideal aspects, while Strawinsky has preferred to be the *enfant terrible*.

It remains to mention with pleasure that the recording of both works heralds the approach of the blessed day when public concerts will be confessedly social and not musical events; and that an orchestral arrangement by Ravel of Debussy's *Sarabande* for piano fills out the eighth side of *Pictures at an Exhibition*.



## At Least One Hour

By DOROTHY E. NICHOLS

What hours of music are now offered the record lovers! Where once it was astonishing to find any work you really wanted complete on the discs, now it is astonishing not to find anything you want. Three years have worked this change. Now we can own music that is still a novelty on our best programs—Sibelius symphonics, Stravinsky ballets, works by young moderns whose names have only begun to penetrate our concert halls. It would seem that there is only one way in which a modern composer can prevent the recording of his music, and that is by being an American.

We are getting a little tired in America of this charge of materialism complacently flung at us from Europe. We hear too often that we are more concerned with physical well-being than with art, that we have bathrooms but no culture. (For myself, I can no more imagine culture without a bathroom than a Frenchman, since Rousseau, could imagine civilization in a cave.) But it would seem that in the record business there is more than a hint that we prefer to borrow our culture from Europe than develop our own.

As usual, we have the material superiority. Except for a few special cases it is still safer to buy an American work by an American orchestra if you want the best recording. But when we compare the lists of present day European and American composers who are found on the wax we confess to a feeling of gloom.

New works by modern Europeans, both minor and major, are given their chance at the discs. A good program of modern Spanish or modern Italian composers could be made up from records. There are English recordings of Bridge, Delius, Elgar. It would not be too great a strain for us to match these composers.

The explanation of why we do not is probably perfectly simple. To the American the phonograph was originally a new toy. My first acquaintance with a disc phonograph was at the home of the school janitor where we listened in rapture to a laughing record. In Europe perhaps only the well-to-do music lovers indulged in phonographs and so demanded good music to play on them.

American companies began with the cheap popular appeal and worked up through celebrities. When they came to the top they turned to Europe. We look in the new catalogues and find Gershwin the best represented among Americans; he was a jazz composer before he was a high-brow. This explains why it is that his important work is recorded, and it is worth noting that his Concerto is the only album by an American composer.

Encouraged by the list under Gershwin we eagerly look under Carpenter for the *Krazy Kat* Ballet, and *Skyscrapers*, at least for the *Adventures in a Perambulator*. This last composition just fits the requirements of one kind of music the record fan buys. There are two kinds, that which you hear in concert over and over and each time become more possessed by the idea that you must own it and have it at hand whenever the mood demands it. Such is a Brahms symphony.

The second type is the music heard in a concert which so delights you that you cannot wait a year or more before you chance to hear it again, and must rush out



and buy it. Such is Carpenter's *Adventures in a Perambulator*. It is still new, it is enchanting, it is better on the second hearing than on the first. But you cannot have the pleasure of owning it for it is not recorded. Two records of songs are all that represent this composer in the Gramophone Shop's new *Encyclopedia*.

## II

Perhaps we are asking too much to expect the record companies to rush in where only Damrosch is not afraid to tread, so we turn to the best known of our contemporary composers, Deems Taylor. Any American program will include him. With all the publicity given *The King's Henchman*, the wide reading of the poem, and the scant opportunity for most of us to hear the opera, there should be a representative set of discs from this work. We find exactly one record, an excellent, high-priced recording made several years ago, and there seems to be no intention to add even a second.

But then, of course, the public buys the things it knows in opera. It would be fairer to look for a symphony composition that is now in the repertory of all the large orchestras. *The Looking Glass Suite* delights its audiences, it is just the kind of thing to own. But no, there is nothing else under Taylor but that one record. No *Looking Glass Suite*, not a selection from it. No *Highwayman*—though when Werrenrath and the Oratorio Society broadcast this work nationally it met with such response that it was repeated—no *Chambered Nautilus*, nothing at all but that one celebrity record.

Then there is Loeffler's *Pagan Poem*. It has been broadcast nationally twice this year, and it stands comparison with any modern symphonic poem. Loeffler is not in the catalogue at all.

Still minded to be generous in excuses we conclude that there is some prejudice against living composers. But Charles Griffes fares little better. Two records of songs, and two of short piano pieces are all we can find of his.

When we turn to the American "classics," we are stimulated to find quite a list under MacDowell. This is really lavish, the *Water Lily*, the *Wild Rose*, the *Witches Dance* and a few songs! MacDowell himself is said to have wished he had not written the *Witches Dance* for fear he might be remembered only by it. There is no record of a concerto, of the *Keltic Symphony*, or any of the larger works. It is like knowing Brahms by a Hungarian Dance or Liszt by *Liebestraum*.

Parker is not listed at all, although his *Hora Novissima* contains exquisite passages.

Compositions with a momentary appeal seem to have a better chance. Schelling's *Victory Ball* was recorded. But Bloch's *America*, which was so widely advertised by its prize award, is not.

Bloch is, of course, not an American born; perhaps that is why he has one album to his credit, the Concerto Grosso. This and one violin composition is his representation. We look in vain for his more famous *Schelomo*. His music is radical, but so is a good deal of the music recorded in Europe. A string quartet in San Francisco has been including his *In the Mountains* and *Tongataboo* in its radio programs for years, but you cannot buy them. Perhaps his *America* is not an endur-

ing composition. But the best way we have to find out if it is great is to have it recorded, thus enabling us to hear it many times.

Percy Grainger belongs among the well-represented young English composers. He has a whole page in the catalogue. It evidently pays to be born even in Australia.

### III

The inevitable retort to this might be that American music is not worth recording. But we have got beyond the stage of arguing that. Nor can it be claimed that it is unknown. The most comprehensive music public in the country today is the audience that listens in on the best broadcast music. Radio, often considered a rival, really creates phonograph audiences. In broadcasting new works especially, it is the most widespread advertising a composition can have. And it is perforce turning its attention to the new. Radio "burns up" music and has to find new works to fill its programs. We hear American compositions broadcast that rank quite as high as many of the modern music samples that are recorded.

It is important, moreover, to consider formal music study. Many schools and colleges are waking up to the use of the phonograph in music appreciation courses. Libraries and music groups will become a standard market. Any such course will devote at least one program to American music, and there is not now available a representative collection of records to make up a one-hour program.

One might with modesty think the Americans worthy of one hour.

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#### RECORDED AMERICAN MUSIC

*To a Water Lily.* (MacDowell) One side and *To a Wild Rose.* One side. Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock. One 10-inch disc (V-1152). \$1.50.

*Sea Pieces.* (MacDowell) Reginald Goss-Custard (Organ). One 10-inch disc (V-B3336). \$1.25.

*Witches Dance.* (MacDowell) Leopold Godowsky (Piano). One 10-inch disc (B-15125). \$1.50.

*Swan Bent Low; The Sea.* (MacDowell) Royal Dadmun (Baritone). One side and *Long Ago Sweetheart Mine; A Maid Sings Light.* One side. Lambert Murphy (Tenor). One 10-inch disc (V-4017). \$1.

*Thy Beaming Eyes.* (MacDowell) Lawrence Tibbett (Baritone). One 10-inch disc (V-1172). \$1.50.

*King's Henchman: Nay, Maccus, Lay Him Down; (2) Oh, Caesar, Great Wert Thou.* (Deems Taylor) Two sides. Lawrence Tibbett (Baritone) with chorus and orchestra of Metropolitan Opera Company. One 12-inch disc (V-8103). \$2.50.

*Jazz Boys.* (John Alden Carpenter) One side and *Cryin' Blues.* (John Alden Carpenter) One side. Vanni-Marcoux (Bass) with piano accompaniment. One 10-inch disc (V-DA988). \$2.

*By a Lonely Forest Pathway.* (Charles Griffes) Alexander Kisselburgh (Baritone). One 10-inch disc (C-2041D). 75c.

*By a Lonely Forest Pathway.* (Charles Griffes) Elisabeth Rethberg (Soprano). One 10-inch disc (B-15146). \$1.50.

*The White Peacock.* (Charles Griffes) Myra Hess (Piano). One 12-inch disc (C-50149D). \$1.25.



*Nocturne à Raguze.* (Ernest Schelling) Two sides. Ignace Paderewski (Piano). One 12-inch disc (V-6700). \$2.

*A Victory Ball.* (Ernest Schelling) Four sides. New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. Two 10-inch discs (V-1127 and V-1128). \$1.50 each.

*Japanese Nocturne.* (Henry Eichheim) Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-7260). \$2.

*Rush Hour in Hong Kong.* (Abram Chassins) One side and *Prelude in D Major.* (Abram Chassins) One side. Alexander Hilsberg (Piano). One 10-inch disc (B-4306). 75c.

*Flirtations in a Chinese Garden* and *Rush Hour in Hong Kong.* (Abram Chasins). Benno Moisevitch (Piano). One 12-inch disc (V-D1217). \$2.

*Juba Dance.* (Nathaniel Dett) Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rosario Bourdon. One 10-inch disc (V-21750). 75c.

*Rhapsody in Blue.* (George Gershwin) Two sides. George Gershwin (Piano) and Paul Whiteman's Concert Orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-35822). \$1.25.

*Concerto in F Major.* (George Gershwin) Six sides. Roy Barge (Piano) and Paul Whiteman's Concert Orchestra. Three 12-inch discs (C-50139D to C-50141D) in album. Columbia Modern Music Album Set No. 3. \$3.75.

*An American in Paris.* (George Gershwin) Four sides. Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. Two 12-inch discs (V-35963 and V-35964). \$1.25 each.

*Short Story.* (George Gershwin) Samuel Dushkin (Violin). One 10-inch disc (V-P794). \$1.50.

*Preludes Nos. 1, 2, 3 and Andante from Rhapsody in Blue.* (George Gershwin) Two sides. George Gershwin (Piano). One 12-inch disc (C-50107D). \$1.25.

*Concerto Grosso.* (Ernest Bloch) Philadelphia Chamber String Simfonieta conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. Three 12-inch discs (V-9596 to V-9598) in album. Victor Set M-66. \$5.

*Nigun—Improvisation.* (Ernest Bloch) Two sides. Joseph Szigeti (Violin). One 10-inch disc (C-2047). 75c.

*Nigun—Improvisation.* (Ernest Bloch) Two sides. Yehudi Menuhin (Violin). One 12-inch disc (V-7108). \$2.

*New Year's Eve in New York.* (Werner-Janssen) Three sides and *Skyward.* (Nathaniel Shilkret) One side. Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. Two 12-inch discs (V-35986 and V-35987). \$1.25 each.



## The Phonograph as Publicity Agent

By RICHARD J. MAGRUDER

The release several months back of the first two Sibelius symphonies was not only vitally significant from a purely musical standpoint. It was also significant (I regret the necessity of having to employ this sadly abused and much mangled word, which is enthusiastically applied to almost anything these days, from the latest wiggle of Miss Clara Bow to the resounding gusts of optimism that issue daily from Washington, but none other, at the moment, seems really adequate) in that it revealed unmistakably the phonograph's unique capacity for acting as a publicity agent for a neglected composer. The phonograph's uses as a publicity agent, of course, have not escaped attention in the past; much in fact has been written on the subject, and many glowing but by no means fatuous predictions as to the important part these uses will play in the musical life of the future have been made. But it wasn't until the release of the Sibelius symphonies occurred that irrefutable proof was afforded that the phonograph can be utilized, with hitherto inconceivable success and, just as important, without the slightest loss of dignity to the subject advertised, as an incomparable medium for giving the very finest publicity imaginable to a composer—the very finest because it uses the simplest and most direct method possible: it gives the music itself.

The release of these symphonies proved conclusively, to anyone who observed closely the public's reaction to that release, that a first-rate composer can be extensively advertised without resorting to the usual noisy fuss and commotion that commonly attend an efficient advertising campaign. It demonstrated that ably produced records of works by neglected but deserving composers can do infinitely more than all the advertising copy writers in the world, working night and day, can do toward obtaining proper appreciation and attention from an intelligent, discriminating audience.

In the past the phonograph has had little opportunity to perform this pious service. The Beethoven and Schubert Centennials, of course, were substantially aided by the energy displayed by the recording companies—Columbia in particular—in issuing records of Beethoven's and Schubert's works. But Beethoven and Schubert already had a large and appreciative public; additions to that public were naturally welcome but not immediately necessary. Beethoven's and Schubert's places in musical history, their statures as composers, were already sufficiently well established. There are other composers, modern as well as classic, who owe the phonograph a debt of sizeable proportions for bringing their work before the public. But in many cases that publicity, while desirable, was not altogether essential. Most modern composers are excellent advertising men as well as musicians, and know perfectly the proper manner in which to get their works into the ears of a not too enchanted world.

Sibelius, on the other hand, needed publicity—good publicity—badly, since he refused to take any part in such a campaign himself. It can be argued quite plausibly, of course, that the release of the two Sibelius symphonies had little or nothing to do with the extraordinary interest in his works that constituted one of the most encouraging signs of the season now drawing to a close. Some, to whom



the wonders of the phonograph have yet to be revealed, may protest that the wide interest in Sibelius' works which followed shortly after the appearance of the records was merely a coincidence. But we need not be unduly concerned with these protests, since obviously there can be no definite way to prove the contention either incontestably right or incontestably wrong; and since there was no noticeably wide interest in Sibelius last season or the previous season or the season before that, it seems only just to give the phonograph its fair share of credit. If it actually was only a coincidence, then it was surely an exceedingly remarkable one.

## II

Within a week or two after the imported pressings of the albums arrived in this country, Stokowski announced a performance of the Sibelius First Symphony. Later, when he went to New York to conduct the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra for a couple of weeks, he included both the First Symphony and the Violin Concerto on his programs. Toscanini\*, too, seemed to be aware of the increasing interest in Sibelius, for he played *En Saga* several times this Winter. And in his Boston and New York concerts, Mr. Koussevitzky, who has distinguished himself in the past by giving careful and fairly frequent performances of Sibelius' works, led his men through several of the Finnish master's scores.

But this interest in Sibelius was by no means confined to the concert hall. It spread to the magazines and newspapers. There suddenly appeared a flood of articles dealing with the man and his music. Olin Downes, music critic to the *New York Times*, gave in one of his Sunday articles a thorough analysis of the first two symphonies, beginning his piece by mentioning the records and their indubitable value to music lovers. The *Phonograph Monthly Review*, long a champion of Sibelius, not only frequently referred to the records editorially, but it also published a lengthy and capable article on the subject. Readers of *Disques* will not have to be reminded that it published articles on Sibelius by Laurence Powell in the November and December issues.

England was also similarly alert to the importance of the records, and several prominent British publications, among them the *Chesterian* and the *British Musician*, printed excellent articles dealing with the Finnish composer.

The consequences of all this, of course, are obvious: Sibelius is gradually coming into his own. Discussed nearly everywhere, his music is constantly winning new and worthwhile adherents. Many people, indeed, unable to find elsewhere among modern composers a hero upon whom they could pin their faith and feel tolerably secure and comfortable in so doing, eagerly seized Sibelius' music, surprised and enchanted at suddenly discovering the surpassing beauties contained therein—beauties, incidentally, that could, and certainly should, have been revealed to us long ago had those who have the largest hand in molding popular musical opinion (conductors and critics) been a little more enterprising in their search for first-rate material to play or discuss.

Is it, then, too much to say that the two Columbia albums containing Sibelius'

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\*Mr. Toscanini has just announced performances of Sibelius' Fourth Symphony for his concerts of March 19, 20, 21 and 22.

First and Second Symphonies supplied the necessary impetus to start the Sibelius ball rolling properly?

### III

Most modern advertising methods, for all their much vaunted effectiveness and success and use of what advertising men are pleased to call "psychology," are insupportably cheap. There are, of course, a few notable exceptions; there are some modern advertisements that are relatively quiet, inoffensive, honest, maybe even not without a certain amount of dignity. But the vast majority are cheap and vulgar, ridiculous when not revolting. Reading them, you are always painfully conscious of the fact that someone is trying to sell you something. More, you are uncomfortably aware that that someone is nearly bursting a blood vessel in the attempt. The net result is to convince you that what you plainly need is not so necessary after all. Cheapness in the advertisements of certain articles, to be sure, may not greatly matter; it may even, indeed, be decidedly appropriate.

But it seems unfortunate that works of art should have to go through this tawdry process in order to be brought before the public. There is something intrinsically wrong in a system that demands that a worthwhile article should have to pass through dirty hands before it can reach the consumer. Frequently, in fact, the process of advertising a reputable article—a book or a piece of music or a play or a painting or maybe even a film—is so vulgar that it succeeds only in obtaining publicity of the very worst sort. It kills altogether the attention of those for whom the thing was originally created.

*All Quiet on the Western Front*, one of the finest achievements of the film people to date, is a case in point. It was treated to just such a process in some cities. Huge posters were placed outside some of the theatres that played it. These posters, in flaming type, shrieked maudlinly that inside one could see—and hear—"youth in a mad search for love and life." Even war, it appeared, could not stifle "youth's constant striving for fun and romance." And by way of appropriate illustration there were interesting pictures depicting a scene in the trenches. A vigorous battle was in progress. In the trenches several young soldiers were seated; on their laps, holding bottles that bore no striking resemblance to Coca-Cola bottles, were perched provocative wenches. Youth, having apparently thus found "love, romance and fun," seemed to be enjoying itself immoderately, sublimely unaware that on all sides the usual activities of modern war-fare, shells dropping, bombs exploding and tanks lumbering aimlessly about, were going on. If this advertisement really succeeded in luring anyone inside, that person must have been thoroughly astonished at what appeared on the screen.

This is, of course, an extreme example; it is only on the lower levels that advertising sinks to such incredible depths of idiocy. But it is by no means a lonely example; there are plenty just as bad, and many much worse. And misrepresentation, distortion and irrelevancy, calculated to inflame the interest of tabloid newspaper readers, are unarguably common in more exalted circles.

### IV

In the past, publicity for composers had to be obtained along similar lines. With this sort of publicity, of course, we are all excessively familiar. We have all heard

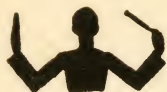


about Beethoven's incorrigible fondness for pretty women, Schubert's incorrigible fondness for pretty women, Wagner's incorrigible fondness for pretty women. When it isn't an incorrigible fondness for pretty women, it is an incorrigible fondness for being gloomy—i.e., Tchaikowsky—or an incorrigible fondness for something else similarly easy and attractive for the popular mind. Here it might be apposite to quote a few sentences from Laurence Powell's "Sentimentality and Music," which appeared in the February issue of *Disques*:

The sentimental attitude undermines any true perception of musical values right from the start, even in a Beethoven or a Schubert devotee. If it was suddenly discovered that the four knocks of the Fifth Symphony were not Fate at all, but simply Beethoven putting down his beer-mug, the Fifth Symphony would rapidly lose adherents, and musical appreciationists would soon go out of business. The sentimentalist likes to picture poor, dear Schubert, wan and pale, disappointed in love and life, dying in the middle of the composition of the *Unfinished*. Broadcast it in the name of truth that Schubert wrote that symphony six years before his death during his first attack of venereal disease, and you probably blow the bottom out of the symphony—it loses its flavor and the unchangeable notes are changed for the sentimentalist, thus showing what distortion results from a sentimental attitude. . . . Beethoven was pictured as a melodramatic lunatic; Haydn as nothing but a dear old gentleman full of funny jokes; and, not knowing any better, many folk accepted the operetta *Blossom Time* as the real history and portrayal of Schubert.

There is no good reason why the phonograph can't do away with this sort of thing, or at least ameliorate the condition noticeably. The release of the two Sibelius symphonies showed that a composer can be advertised in a dignified, intelligent, immensely effective way through his records. The phonograph has already succeeded in hauling out from unwarranted obscurity many first-rate works. There is every reason to suppose that it will continue to do so in the future. Before very long it should not be necessary for a composer to have to resort to high-powered advertising methods in order to bring his music before the public. Put on discs, that music can be appraised more rapidly and accurately and by a larger number of people than it ever could in the past. The first-rate composer should thus be able to achieve recognition sooner. Unlike Sibelius, he should not have to wait until the closing years of his life to be accorded appreciation from the whole world of intelligent music lovers. And, what is just as pleasant to consider, the musical fraud, having placed his music on records, where, because of frequent performance, its worthlessness will be mercilessly exposed, should not enjoy the enormous popularity that is now his lot. At least, the duration of his popularity should be appreciably shorter than at present. If, as surely seems thoroughly plausible, the phonograph should have a prominent part in accomplishing that, it would be an extremely impressive achievement.





## ORCHESTRA

SIBELIUS  
V-7380

{ THE SWAN OF TUONELA, Op. 22. Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski.  
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

V-9925  
and  
V-9926

{ EN SAGA, Op. 9. Three sides and  
VALSE TRISTE. One side. New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eugène Goossens. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Nearly all Sibelius' program music is based upon incidents from the *Kalevala*, the epic of Finnish mythology. Tuonela is Hades, ruled over by Tuoni, the god of death. In *The Swan of Tuonela*, Sibelius gives us the melancholy song of a swan drifting on the brackish waters of the river that, like the Styx, separates the living from the dead. The music conjures up an atmosphere of vagueness, clinging mists and the dank stillness of death. One cannot help thinking what an appropriate prelude this piece would make for that eerie play, *Outward Bound*. It can also be compared to Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead*, but there is no frothy terror in it, no *Dies Irae*, none of the hysteria of Tchaikowsky's Sixth Symphony: there is nothing pathetic about it. Sibelius is not pathetic or pathological. This music is the quiet and sombre thinking of a pagan philosopher on inevitable death, couched in the mythology of his own race.

A certain monotony accrues to the music, the monotony of a fog-shrouded scene, of a river eternally flowing yet imperceptible in its movement, the monotony of the stillness of death. But perhaps this monotony has been brought into over-prominence in this recording, because the song of the swan has often been made too obvious. This song, on the English horn, should be more veiled: death is a mystery and the swan's utterance should, in the name of poetry, preserve more of this mystery. The whole piece should suggest a scene, perceived as through a glass, darkly: it should certainly not be dramatized. In *Valse Triste* we are given a dramatized piece on death, but in *The Swan* a meditation. Apart from this fault, the recording will not disappoint those who have come to expect great things from Stokowski discs.

Judged in the light of Sibelius' work generally, it stands out as individual in more than one respect. There is an absence of that stark boldness resulting from diatonic triadic harmony: there is no suggestion of folksong: the Finnish dialect is dropped and one might even go so far as to say that there are evidences of a Finn speaking French. This piece is impressionistic rather than programistic, and perhaps in its very impressionism it occasionally suggests Debussy, but this is a mere coincidence, because Sibelius and Debussy are as unlike as granite and incense.

*En Saga*, now repressed by Victor, was reviewed on page 509 of the February issue of *Disques*.

LAURENCE POWELL




**WAGNER**

V-7381

and

V-7382


 { SIEGFRIED IDYL. Four sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra  
conducted by Karl Muck. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 68.

B-90135

and

B-90136

 { SIEGFRIED IDYL. Four sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra  
conducted by Otto Klemperer. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

An excess of almost anything, whether of music, religion, art, politics, literature, depression, prosperity or Noble Experiments, can easily become profoundly boring, and in some cases maybe even intolerable. Thus, if England has lately been treated to a flood of recorded *Siegfried Idyls*—one of those appalling floods which the gramophone companies manage with such singular efficiency and skill—there may be some truth in Compton Mackenzie's remark in the January *Gramophone* that "one might suppose that we had had enough *Siegfried Idyls* for the present . . ." As it happens, however, this country has been showered with no such blessings, and an adequate recording of the *Siegfried Idyl* has been dismally absent from the local catalogues. The appearance of these discs of Karl Muck's accordingly is of some importance, for they not only fill a glaring gap in the catalogues, but they give us, as well, an interpretation that could not readily be bettered. To say that Muck's interpretation is final and incapable of improvements, of course, would be somewhat over-stating the case, but it is hardly likely that a version noticeably superior to this one will be issued for sometime.

The birth of Siegfried Wagner in 1869 seemed to his father an altogether remarkable and extraordinary event,—so remarkable and extraordinary, indeed, that he resolved to write a piece of music, not only properly to commemorate the marvel, but also as a graceful tribute to Cosima. In November, 1870, then, he wrote, in secret, the *Siegfried Idyl*, and on Christmas morning, 1870—Cosima's birthday—a little orchestra of fifteen players gathered on the stairs of Wagner's villa at Tribschen. Standing at the top of the stairs, Wagner conducted the orchestra through the piece, pleasurably surprising Cosima—even, if we may judge from her diary, overwhelming her—and, in fact, the whole household. That, at any rate, is the story Hans Richter related some years later. Some have questioned its truth, claiming that the stairs were too small to accommodate fifteen players comfortably. Whether or not it was played as Richter described, however, is of scant importance now. We have the music, and we have Dr. Muck's sovereign performance of it; and they are sufficiently admirable.

A good deal of the thematic material was derived from the third act of *Siegfried*, which Wagner was working on at the time. With this and a few other odds and ends, including the cradle-song, *Schlafe, Kindchen, Schlafe*, he fashioned a glowing piece of music in which Ernest Newman has discovered, appropriately enough, "all the fountains of human tenderness . . . unsealed . . . This is not an individual father musing over his child's cradle, but all nature crooning a song of love for its little ones."



So much attention (a large proportion of it well-deserved) is paid in the United States to the three conductors at the head of our best known orchestras that we perhaps forget, now and then, that Dr. Muck, now in his seventies, still makes music in Germany, and with, judging from these records, apparently the same matchless thaumaturgy that he once practised with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His reading here is a beautiful piece of work—restrained, quiet, unassuming, yet charged with the intensity of feeling with which the score abounds. The industrious Berlin State Opera Orchestra gives its customary exact and painstaking performance, and the recording is richly satisfying and well done.

Klemperer's reading, too, is a good one, not so well-poised and perfectly proportioned as Dr. Muck's, perhaps, but nonetheless a thoroughly sound piece of work. The recording is very good. The same orchestra, incidentally, is used in both versions.

**GRAINGER**  
V-C2002  
IMPORTED

{  
MOCK MORRIS DANCES. One side and  
HANDEL IN THE STRAND. One side. New Light Sym-  
phony Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent.  
One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

V-36035

{  
OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY: *Children's March*.  
One side and  
COLONIAL SONG. One side. Victor Symphony Orchestra  
conducted by Rosario Bourdon. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Lively and with considerable bounce, these well-known little pieces by Grainger somehow avoid the monotony that generally characterizes such attempts, and their wide popularity is fully deserved. W. R. Anderson, in reviewing *Handel in the Strand* and *Mock Morris Dances* for the *Gramophone*, finds the performance too slow and heavy, complaining that clog dancers would have a sorry time performing to this record. To one ignorant of the niceties of clog-dancing, however, the playing sounds satisfactory, and the recording is first-rate. The two numbers played by the Victor Symphony are ascribed on the labels to Grainger-Schmid. *Colonial Song* was published in 1913. Both pieces are well played.

**BOCCHERINI**  
**HAYDN**  
V-AW181  
IMPORTED

{  
MINUET. (Boccherini) One side and  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DANCE. (Haydn) One side.  
Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski.  
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

This disc, played, as the label puts it, by the "Orchestra Sinfonica di Filadelfia diretta dal Mo Leopoldo Stokowski," comes from Italy; it hasn't been given a domestic release as yet. The Boccherini *Minuet* and the Haydn dance are lovely pieces, quiet, dignified and charming, and they make a delightful record. Though neither displays the Philadelphia Orchestra at full strength, since only a small orchestra of strings and woodwinds is used, the disc shows the band at its well-drilled and polished best. Both pieces are crisply played, and the strings have a lovely, mellow tone. The recording is beyond cavil.



**BEETHOVEN**

V-C2022

to

V-C2025

IMPORTED

SYMPHONY NO. 5 in C Minor. Eight sides. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Franz Schalk.  
Four 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.



Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 1.

The Fifth Symphony means so very much to so very many people that it seems a pity that a really fine recording of it should have been so long in making its appearance. Thousands of music lovers, in fact, make their first acquaintance with symphonic music with the C Minor; and a great many of these people, living in remote and inaccessible parts of the world, have had to rely upon the records. When Sir Landon Ronald's version of the work for Victor and Felix Weingartner's for Columbia first appeared, they seemed superbly recorded, but the achievements of recent years have made these sets seem somewhat tame, and their several flaws, easily passed over in those innocent days, now stand forth in a harsh and revealing light. In brief, this fine recording by Schalk and the admirable musicians of the Vienna Philharmonic—despite some blunders in the reading—was needed long ago. The Fifth is unquestionably played far too much these days, but that is surely no good reason why a first-rate recording of it shouldn't adorn the catalogue of every enterprising manufacturer.

A writer in the January issue of the English magazine, *Music and Letters*, declares that "After having heard many different orchestras in this country as well as abroad, and notwithstanding the recent successes of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra [*sic*] (which, I believe, was due more to the glamor attached to the genial Toscanini than to the actual playing of the orchestra), I have come to the conclusion that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is far and away the best in the world . . ." Discussing the Viennese double-bass players, the writer, pointing out that the double-bass is the tonal foundation of the modern orchestra, remarks that "to have heard the Viennese play the wonderful bass passage in the Scherzo of the Fifth Symphony is to have heard something never to be forgotten. The depth of tone, and the vigor of their bowing, lends itself admirably to those glorious passages. The double-bass players' happy moments!"

Whether the results obtained by the Viennese musicians in this passage actually are superior to what some other orchestras could achieve is a matter for speculation; but certainly it would be hard to find a better interpretation of the Scherzo than that accorded it by Dr. Schalk and his men in this set. It is superlatively done and revealingly recorded; it is, indeed, the high point of these records. The first and last movements are not so good; the interpretation is ragged and careless, and the band doesn't hold together so well. Those who have grown accustomed to Sir Landon Ronald's stirring performance of the Finale, in which he lets his orchestra thunder gloriously, will perhaps find Schalk's quieter reading of this movement tame and disappointing. Compared to Ronald's, it seems to miss a good deal of the fine sweep and power that we commonly associate with this music. Something seems to have gone astray with the very opening chords of the first movement, too; it is as if the band, in too great a hurry to get started, bungled matters.



Otherwise there is little to find fault with. The recording is remarkably true and accurate, setting forth the symphony in a highly realistic way. The feeling of the concert hall is persuasively communicated throughout. Many details, lost in other and earlier versions, come out excellently here. Toward the end of the last movement, the piccolo, not audible in Ronald's set, is plainly heard in these records. And the horns in the first movement really convince one that they are horns. There may be, somewhere or other—we haven't heard Richard Strauss' performance for Polydor, which is said to be admirable—a better recorded version of the Fifth than this, but if there is it hasn't as yet come our way.

**ELGAR**

V-D1899

and

V-D1900

IMPORTED

CROWN OF INDIA *Suite*, Op. 66. Three sides and  
POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE *March No. 5*. One side.  
London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edward Elgar.  
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

The *Crown of India*, most English critics are at some pains to inform us, is by no means representative of the real Elgar. It was written in 1911 to celebrate the visit of the King-Emperor to India, and the following year it was produced at the London Coliseum, with the composer conducting. Mr. J. F. Broughton Porte covers elsewhere in this issue the larger and more important aspects of Elgar's art, and so it will not be necessary to say much of this suite save that it is somewhat commonplace. Over-assertive, blatant and full of obvious effects, it is hardly calculated to charm the hearer expecting big things from the composer. Elgar's incorrigible passion for turning out such affairs has often been the source of considerable embarrassment on the part of many of his English admirers. The suite consists of an *Introduction and Dance of Nautch Girls*, *Minuet*, *Warriors' Dance* and *March of the Mogul Emperors*. None calls for any extended comment. . . . The new *Pomp and Circumstance* contains plenty of vigor and energy. If you do not care for Elgar's tunes in these records, which are surely no worse than many another widely praised tune, it is pretty certain that you will greatly enjoy the clear, vivid recording. Under the composer's able hand, the London orchestra plays with fine verve and gusto.

**STRAWINSKY**

V-D1932

IMPORTED

SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE *Suite: Chinese March*. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

**MOUSSORG-  
SKY-RAVEL  
DEBUSSY-  
RAVEL**

V-7372

to

V-7375

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION (Moussorgsky-Ravel).  
Seven sides and  
SARABANDE (Debussy-Ravel). One side. Boston Symphony  
Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky.  
Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-102. \$8.

These carefully recorded and played records are the subject of an article, "Tonal Imagery," by Joseph Cottler, printed elsewhere in this issue. *Pictures at an Exhibition*, though not yet issued on the regular monthly Victor lists, is now available.



**R. STRAUSS  
REGER**

B-90130  
to  
B-90134

DER BURGER ALS EDELMANN: *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*. (R. Strauss) Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Richard Strauss. Nine sides and

VALSE D'AMOUR from *Ballet Suite*, Op. 130, No. 5. (Reger) One side. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Alois Melichar.

Five 12-inch discs in album. Brunswick Set No. 28. \$7.50.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 267.

**R. STRAUSS  
C-67892D**

ROSENKAVALIER: *Waltzes*. Two sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Notes on Strauss' *Bourgeois gentilhomme* Suite were included in the review of Walther Straram's excellent recording of the work for Columbia, discussed in this place in the December issue. Overlooked for three or four years by the recording companies, this delightfully piquant music, having been released in two versions within the last couple of months, seems at last to have struck somebody's fancy. It was well worth doing, for while we have plenty of records of Strauss' bigger and more grandiose conceptions, recordings of his smaller works are rather scarce. He is as enchanting in the latter as he is impressive in the former. Straram's set omitted No. 7 of the suite, *Entrance of Cleonte*. Strauss presents all nine numbers here, and they follow in proper order.

Straram takes the music more briskly than the composer does; it is sparkling, brilliant music, and the French conductor emphasizes these qualities to the *nth* degree, thereby insuring quick sales to those collectors who listen to snatches of a set in a booth before deciding upon their purchases. Strauss, more cautious and restrained, proceeds very leisurely. The consequence of this is that at the first hearing the Straram set appears to be more attractive; Strauss' less obvious reading keeps something for the second, third, fourth and fifth hearings; and that, for sufficiently obvious reasons, is eminently proper and desirable in a phonograph recording. The composer's version, in the main, is very well recorded, but it is not entirely free, here and there, from a certain coarseness and roughness. This is not offensively noticeable, however. . . . On the odd side of the set the *Valse d'Amour* from Max Reger's *Ballet Suite* is persuasively set forth by the same band under Alois Melichar's baton.

Incomparably more ravishing are the *Rosenkavalier* waltzes as played by the Berlin Philharmonic under Walter, who is to appear with the Philharmonic-Symphony next year. The disc, in all respects a superb one, was reviewed last month from the imported pressing.

**BRAHMS  
C-67893D  
and  
C-67894D**

ACADEMIC FESTIVAL *Overture*, Op. 80. Three sides and  
SYMPHONY NO. 1 in *C Minor: Un poco allegretto*. One side. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

The imported recording of the *Academic Festival* was reviewed here last month.



**SAINT-SAËNS**

V-W1092

to

V-W1095

IMPORTED

**SYMPHONY NO. 3 in C Minor with Organ.** Eight sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Piero Coppola. Organ: Alex Cellier; Pianists: Danise Herbrecht, Lucien Petitjean. Four 12-inch discs in album. \$8.

**CHABRIER**

O-123.675

and

O-123.676

IMPORTED

**GWENDOLINE: Overture.** Three sides and **RONDE VILLAGEOISE.** One side. Colonne Orchestra conducted by Gabriel Pierné. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

**FRANCK**

V-W1111

and

V-W1112

IMPORTED

**PSYCHE: Symphonic Poem.** (a) *Sommeil de Psyché*; (b) *Psyché et Eros*. Four sides. Société des Concerts du Conservatoire conducted by Piero Coppola. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Were the Saint-Saëns symphony poorly, or even indifferently, played and recorded, it would doubtless be insufferably tiresome to listen to; but as it happens the recording is superbly achieved, and the beauty of the interpretation and reproduction makes it genuinely interesting. In Saint-Saëns' lengthy list of works, the symphony is Op. 78. Written for orchestra, organ and piano (four hands), it was first performed by the Royal Philharmonic Society in May, 1886. Nowadays the work has a somewhat unsavory reputation for being dull. While the charge is not without a certain basis of truth, the symphony has, nonetheless, moments—not, unfortunately, a startling abundance of them—of real power and charm, and these, plus the altogether splendid recording and revealing interpretation, give the set a value which it otherwise would certainly lack. It is, at any rate, not to be dismissed as the ineffable bore that it is supposed to be. The first movement, *Adagio—Allegro moderato*, begins rather discouragingly, and contains little of interest. Its trite petulance and pompous climaxes seem long-winded and pointless. After this, though, comes the *Poco adagio*, a movement of genuine charm. Following the empty brilliance of the first movement, the subdued restfulness and calm of the *Poco adagio* are very appealing. The Scherzo is eminently worth listening to. Attractively written, with the proper amount of humor and gayety, it is pretty nearly perfectly recorded. The Finale is a fine recording achievement, too. Merely to get such a tremendous amount of sound on a disc, and further to have it distributed so accurately, in itself constitutes a very considerable feat. The organ is beautifully reproduced, and Coppola's reading is admirable. The set is hardly to be recommended to the average music lover, but those who are seeking a novelty will find it well worth trying . . . Chabrier's *Gwendoline* was first given at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, in 1886. The Overture is rather dull, and never seems to get started properly. The *Ronde Villageoise*, on the other hand, is more attractive. Lively and full of color, it is deftly played by the Colonne band . . . Notes on Franck's *Psyché* suite were given on page 85 of the May issue, 1930, when Defauw's version of *Psyché et Eros*, No. 4 of the suite, appeared. Coppola's set contains in addition the first number, the *Sleep of Psyché*. Typical of Franck, both numbers can be highly recommended to those who like the Symphony in D Minor.



**RAVEL**

C-67890D  
and  
C-67891D

**BOLERO.** Four sides. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra  
conducted by Willem Mengelberg. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.



Miniature Score: Durand et Cie.

This is at once the best recording and the best interpretation of Ravel's *Bolero* thus far made available on records. The last in the field with a recording of the piece, Columbia nonetheless has the most successful version, mechanically and artistically, to offer. Mengelberg maintains throughout the four sides the rigid tempo called for in the score, and the recording is free from blemishes. The instruments are recorded with splendid clarity and accuracy, and everything seems to be in its proper place and order. One wonders, though, merely as a matter of curiosity, whether there is much demand for the *Bolero* at present. The somewhat frantic interest it aroused last season and the numerous performances—not to mention the two recordings—that followed as a natural consequence of that interest, have made the piece excessively familiar to most of us; and it isn't the sort of music that one cares to listen to too often. This season interest in the work has apparently died a natural death. If Mengelberg's stirring performance doesn't succeed in resurrecting at least part of that initial interest, it will be reasonable to suppose that the *Bolero* has at last found its proper place: a cozy spot on the shelf.

**MENDELSSOHN-**

B-90137  
and  
B-90138

**MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: Overture.** Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler. Three sides and  
**LA FILEUSE (*The Spinner*).** One side. Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

C-G50280D

**MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: (a) Scherzo; (b) Wedding March.** Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 804.

By one of those mystifying coincidences that mark—and sometimes mar—recording activities, we get this month from two different sources a generous portion of the incidental music Mendelssohn composed for Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. After hearing the Overture as played by Wilhelm Furtwängler, there should be little doubt in anybody's mind as to the finest version of the work available on records. The piece adapts itself exceedingly well to the phonograph, and Furtwängler manages to squeeze every ounce of loveliness out of the familiar music. The recording throughout is clean-cut, vivid and about as accurate as can be expected of records. The Berlin Philharmonic responds to its conductor's wishes with alacrity and precision. The set constitutes an excellent addition to Furtwängler's meagre list of recordings. . . . Dr. Weissmann's version of the Scherzo hardly bears comparison with Toscanini's superb recording; but the former's, being included in the humble black label class, doesn't pretend to any such super-



lative polish and finish as one expects in the more expensive recordings. For its modest price it is thoroughly well done. The *Wedding March*, too, is a creditable piece of recording and interpretation. . . . On the odd side of the Furtwängler set Albert Wolff and the Lamboureux band devote their energies to Mendelssohn's *La Fileuse*. The results are enjoyable.

**GANNE**  
C-DF58  
IMPORTED

LES SALTIMBANQUES: *Overture*. Two sides. Orchestre Symphonique du "Lutetia Wagram" conducted by Fernand Heurteur. One 10-inch disc. \$1.

**AUBER**  
C-DX77  
IMPORTED

CROWN DIAMONDS: *Overture*. Two sides. Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra conducted by Dan Godfrey. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

**STEN-  
HAMMAR**  
**SIBELIUS**  
V-Z206  
IMPORTED

SENTIMENTAL ROMANCE *for Violin and Orchestra*. (Stenhammar) One side and  
ROMANCE, Op. 78, No. 2. (Sibelius) One side. Göteborg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Tor Mann. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

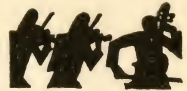
**REISSIGER**  
PD-27189  
IMPORTED

MILL ON THE CLIFF: *Overture*. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Weigert. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Louis-Gaston Ganne, noted French composer, was born in Buxières-Les-Mines, Allier, in 1862. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire, where he was a pupil of Dubois, Massenet and Franck. As a conductor, he enjoyed considerable success in Paris and Monte Carlo. Among his works are numerous operas of the lighter sort, ballets and divertissements. The *Overture to Les Saltimbanques* was produced in Paris in 1899. It is a bright little piece, and includes a march that is frequently played. The recording and rendition are well done. . . . Auber's *Overtures* seem to be enjoying considerable phonographic popularity these days. Those to *Fra Diavolo*, *The Bronze Horse* and *La Muta di Portici* have been reviewed in recent issues of *Disques* (pages 358 and 410 of the October and November numbers, respectively), and now the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, which plays with more enthusiasm than competence, presents the *Crown Diamonds Overture*. The opera was first produced in 1841, and obtained great popularity in France and Germany. . . . Wilhelm Stenhammar, prominent Scandinavian pianist, conductor and composer, was born in Stockholm in 1871. His *Sentimental Romance* is precisely what its name indicates. The Sibelius number was reviewed in the December issue of *Disques* on page 400. . . . Karl Gottlieb Reissiger was born in Belzig in 1798, and died at Dresden in 1859. A prolific composer, he wrote in nearly all the forms. The *Overture to Die Felsenmühle von Etalières*, capably presented and recorded here, is about all that has survived from the work, which was first produced in 1829.



# CHAMBER MUSIC



DEBUSSY  
CASSADO  
C-67895D  
and  
C-67896D

SONATA FOR VIOLONCELLO AND PIANO. (Debussy)  
Three sides and

ARAGONESA: *Spanish Dance*. (Cassado) One side. Gaspar Cassado (Violoncello) and G. von Mendelssohn-Gordigiani (Piano). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

"Melody," Debussy is quoted as saying after *Pelléas and Mélisande*, "is . . . almost anti-lyric, and powerless to express the constant change of emotion or life."

Shortly after, he began work on six sonatas under the title, in old script, "*Pour Divers Instruments, Par Claude Debussy, Musicien Français*." If he insisted on being French, it was to dispute the German basis of musical architecture; if archaic, it was to turn his back on the current solipsism in music. Equipped with his rare scale and freed from the tower of academical music which he felt was toppling from strain, he hoped to measure something realer than sound. He finished only three of the six sonatas: one for violin and piano; one for flute, viola, and harp; and this one for 'cello and piano, which is as fine an instance as any passage from *Pelléas and Mélisande* of what Debussy sought in renouncing the robust German heritage.

He sought here the very opposite of emotional expansion. His horror of the redundant was so strong that this sonata is thin with an effort to make a sonorous force out of emptiness, to let the silence ring as a footfall in spacious halls, as his spare notes (Debussy would unblushingly say it) in the halls of the spirit.

This wooing of self is so delicate. Sharp, gross contours crush the illusion; mists help it.

"*du tant insonore côté que ne dénonce le Soleil! . . .*"

The line of notes are rather *Sprachgesang* than melody, more like fragments floating off. There is tonality as there are definite bursts of rhythm, but the music finds rest in them only as flying things in tree-tops, to leap from. The last movement alone is full, and offered as a joyous relief from the chimera of Self. . . .

The realism of the 'cello tone is noteworthy in this recording. Cassado's *Aragonesa* fills out the fourth side of the set.

JOSEPH COTTLER

FALLA  
C-50278D

SUITE POPULAIRE ESPAGNOLE: *El Paño Moruno; Nana; Asturiana; Jota*. Two sides. Maurice Maréchal (Violoncello) with piano accompaniment. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

This suite is an arrangement for 'cello and piano of four of Falla's *Seven Spanish Songs*. These songs are available in their original arrangement, sung by Maria Barrientos and Dolores de Silvera; they were reviewed in the August issue of *Disques*. The numbers Maréchal plays here lend themselves excellently to his instrument, and he gives this colorful music a vigorous, assured interpretation. The recording is clear and full.

**BEETHOVEN**

V-DB1377

to

V-DB1381

IMPORTED

QUARTET NO. 12 in *E Flat Major*, Op. 127. Nine sides and  
 QUARTET IN B MAJOR: *Scherzo-Allegro*, Op. 18, No. 6.  
 One side. Flonzaley Quartet.  
 Five 12-inch discs in album. \$12.50.

Miniature Scores: Philharmonia Nos. 321 and 315.

Since extended comment on this release will be included in an article on the Beethoven string quartets, scheduled for an early issue of *Disques*, it will only be necessary here to remark that the set is in all respects a memorable one. Disbanded for some months and thus unavailable to the concert-goer, the incomparable Flonzaleys can still be heard to excellent advantage by record collectors. The set is admirably recorded and played, and belongs beside that other recent Flonzaley Quartet release, the Schubert Quartet in G Major, reviewed here in January.

**PIANO****VERDI-  
LISZT**

C-2395D

PARAPHRASE ON RIGOLETTO QUARTET. Two sides.  
 Irene Scharrer (Piano). One 10-inch disc. 75c.

**LISZT**

V-EH467

and

V-EH468

IMPORTED

WEINEN, KLAGEN *Variations on a Theme by Bach*. Four  
 sides. Franz Josef Hirt (Piano).  
 Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

**DEBUSSY**

O-166.316

IMPORTED

HOMMAGE A S. PICKWICK *Esq.—P.P.M.R.C.* One side  
 and  
 ONDINE. One side. Marius-François Gaillard (Piano).  
 One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

Irene Scharrer is an excellent pianist, and she hasn't been heard on records for sometime. But the flashy Liszt transcription of the quartet from *Rigoletto* doesn't give her much of an opportunity to display her more valuable qualities, so that her return to the lists can't be greeted with the enthusiasm that her abilities would otherwise demand. Her performance is, of course, a good one, brilliant, finished and well balanced. The recording, save for one or two slips, is generally very good. . . . The Liszt variations on the Bach theme are more interesting, and Hirt negotiates them deftly and with assurance. The tone of his piano is reproduced very realistically. . . . The two Debussy numbers date from 1910. The Gramophone Shop's *Encyclopedia* lists *Ondine* under Debussy, but there is no mention of any recording of *Hommage à S. Pickwick*. Both pieces make excellent recording material, but the pianist here isn't so successful with them. His playing seems stiff and forced, and the recording isn't any too kind to the tone of his instrument.



# OPERA



## MASCAGNI

V-9885

to

V-9893

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA: *Opera in One Act.* Principals, Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala conducted by Carlo Sabajno. Nine 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-98. \$13.50.

### THE CAST

Santuzza ..... Delia Sanzio  
Turiddu ..... Giovanni Breviario  
Lucia ..... Olga De Franco  
Alfio ..... Piero Basini  
Lola ..... Mimma Pantaleoni

C-67880D

to

C-67889D

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA: *Opera in One Act.* Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. Ten 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Operatic Set No. 7. \$15.

### THE CAST

Santuzza ..... G. Arangi Lombardi  
Turiddu ..... Maria Castagna  
Lucia ..... Ida Mannarini  
Alfio ..... Gino Lulli  
Lola ..... Ida Mannarini

Much the same thing can be said of both of these sets. They come from the same admirable source, La Scala, though the conductors and principals, of course, are different. Considered as a whole, each album succeeds in presenting a stirring, convincing performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The singers, taken in the aggregate, are satisfactory, but when their individual contributions are examined various unpleasant flaws are easily discernible. *Cavalleria Rusticana*, however, lends itself so admirably to recording purposes—its highly dramatic plot, its quick action, its brief length, and its stormy and easily grasped music giving it an effectiveness on the phonograph that many less obvious but more meritorious operas lack—that any fairly competent performance, well recorded, should make for an enjoyable hour or so for the opera lover.

The Columbia set was reviewed in the August issue, when the imported pressings arrived in this country. Repressed by the local Columbia Company, the set seems to have retained all of the good qualities noted in that review, and it makes a very acceptable addition to Columbia's operatic series. The singing in the Columbia album, on the whole, impresses this reviewer more favorably than that in the Victor set, but Sabajno, on the other hand, seems to handle his orchestra more effectively than Molajoli. The chorus in both albums sings admirably.



Good recording prevails in each set, and the balance between voices and orchestra has been creditably maintained. Not extraordinary recordings, then, but sets that should give a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction to the opera lover. Since both contain an equal share of flaws and virtues, it would be absurd to recommend one in preference to the other. Perhaps the best method of determining the finer performance would be to resort to the time-honored plan of tossing a penny in the air.

SULLIVAN

V-D1909

to

V-D1918

IMPORTED

PATIENCE: *Comic Opera in Two Acts.* (Gilbert-Sullivan)

Twenty sides. Darrell Fancourt, Martyn Green, Derek Oldham, George Baker, Leslie Rands, Nellie Briercliffe, Marjorie Eyre, Rita Mackay, Bertha Lewis, Winifred Lawson, Chorus and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent.

Ten 12-inch discs in album. \$20.

HERBERT

V-9903

to

V-9907

VICTOR HERBERT ALBUM: *Pan Americana; Yester-thoughts; Serenade; Punchinello; Fleurette; Under the Elms; Selections from Eileen, The Rose of Algeria, The Only Girl, Babette, Princess Pat, Land of My Own Romance, Natoma, It Happened in Nordland.* Ten sides. Victor Salon Group and Orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret.

Five 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set C-11. \$7.50.

The surpassing charm and excellence of the H.M.V. Gilbert and Sullivan series—fittingly celebrated in these pages in the February issue by Dr. Isaac Goldberg—have made an electrical recording of *Patience* absolutely imperative. *Patience*, like the other Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and perhaps even more so than the others, stands the test of time uncommonly well; indeed, one notes surprisingly few ravages made by that inexorable devastator. The thing, in a word or so, is thoroughly apposite and relevant. How the present age needs a Gilbert and Sullivan! What an incomparable affair they could make of the decorous New Humanists, now rocking the land with their pious dictums!

This set, like the others in the series, was made under the competent supervision of Rupert D'Oyly Carte. The cast is familiar, and Dr. Malcolm Sargent again has charge of the orchestra. Thus it goes almost without saying that the work is presented with superlative skill, irresistible charm and great good humor. In the face of such excellence and gusto, it would be a particularly distasteful task to attempt to find flaws; they are probably present, but one is never conscious of them. The Lady Jane's affecting, and strangely candid, soul-searching at the beginning of the second act is perfectly done by Bertha Lewis; she is, of course, given the appropriate double bass accompaniment. And that magnificent scene where the Duke, Major and Colonel, momentarily succumbing to the æstheticism of the Inner Brotherhood—"perceptively intense and consummately utter"—in order to win favor with the ladies, sing the trio *It's clear that mediæval art alone retains its zest* comes off with just the proper flourish. And nearly every number is presented with similar skill. One could hardly ask for a finer chorus of maidens and dragoons; nor could the orchestra be readily bettered. The recording, as clear and full as that in *Iolanthe* and *Pinafore*, calls for nothing but praise.



The first Victor Herbert album, issued several years ago, made something of a stir when it first appeared, and this new one seems likely to win equal popularity. The selections are well chosen and skilfully presented. 'Mr. Shilkret has done his work extremely well; if now and then he seems to let loose rather large and cloying quantities of mawkish sentiment, lovers of Herbert's music won't seriously object. There are many likeable tunes here, and while they don't stand the test of constant repetition very well, they nonetheless are attractive now and then. Such pleasant trifles as *Absinthe Frappé*, from *It Happened in Nordland*, and the various selections from *Natoma*, including the *Dagger Dance*, deserve inclusion in the record catalogues. The recording is in every way excellent, revealing a greater degree of delicacy and refinement than that in the first Herbert album.



**PUCCINI**

C-67854D  
to  
C-67867D

**TOSCA:** *Opera in Three Acts.* Twenty-eight sides. Bianca Scacciati, Alessandro Granda, Enrico Molinari, Salvatore Baccaloni, Aristide Baracchi, Emilio Venturini, Tommaso Cortellini, Chorus of La Scala Theatre (directed by Vittore Zeneziani) and Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.  
Fourteen 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Operatic Set No. 6. \$21.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 183.

Columbia's operatic series already includes albums of *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Aida*, *Madam Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, and *Tristan and Isolde*. *Tosca*, recorded here in complete form—only four bars are lacking from the score, and these are of little consequence,—forms a notable addition to the series. The imported pressings of the work were reviewed on page 182 of the July, 1930, issue of *Disques*.

**MOZART**

B-90139

**IL SERAGLIO:** *Che pur aspro al coro.* Two sides. Felice Hüni-Mihacsek (Soprano) with orchestra conducted by J. Heidenreich. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

The aria given here, though labelled in Italian, is sung in German. It is the same piece—*Martern aller arten*—as that sung by Maria Nemeth for H.M.V., which was reviewed on page 473 of the January issue of *Disques*. Felice Hüni-Mihacsek has a lovely voice, exceedingly well adapted to such an aria as this one, and her rendition is every bit as skilful and charming as Maria Nemeth's. Brunswick, in putting out nearly each month Mozart recordings by this excellent artist, is performing an admirable service; for the opera lover, coming to Mozart in his search for unhackneyed operatic records, has to be content, at the moment, with brief snatches and odds and ends.

**MASSENET  
BIZET**

C-2410D

**WERTHER:** *Le lied d'Ossian.* (Massenet) One side and  
**PEARL FISHERS:** *De mon amie, fleur endormie.* (Bizet) One side. Joseph Rogatchewsky (Tenor) with orchestra.  
One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Excellent singing and recording. The tenor is a member of the Paris Opéra-Comique.



RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF

# APRIL

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Album</b><br/><b>No. 28</b><br/><b>90130</b><br/><b>to</b><br/><b>90134</b><br/><b>incl.</b></p> | <p><b>RICHARD STRAUSS—DER BÜRGER ALS EDELMANN</b><br/>(Complete incidental music to Moliere's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme")<br/>Suite for Chamber Orchestra<br/><b>THE STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN</b><br/>Conducted by the Composer, RICHARD STRAUSS</p> | <p>Recorded in Europe<br/>PRICE <b>\$7.50</b><br/>Compl. with Album</p> |
|  | <p><b>REGER—Valse D'AMOUR—From Ballet Suite</b><br/>Op. 130 No. 5<br/><b>THE STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN</b><br/>ALOIS MELICHAR, Conductor</p>  |   |
| <p><b>90135</b><br/><b>90136</b></p>   | <p><b>WAGNER—SIEGFRIED IDYLL—In 4 Parts</b><br/><b>THE STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN</b><br/>OTTO KLEMPERER, Conductor</p>  | <p>Recorded in Europe<br/>PRICE <b>\$3.00</b></p>                       |
| <p><b>90137</b><br/><b>90138</b></p>   | <p><b>MENDELSSOHN—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM</b><br/>Overture In 3 Parts<br/><b>THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, BERLIN</b><br/>WILHELM FURTWÄNGLER, Conductor</p>  | <p>Recorded in Europe<br/>PRICE <b>\$3.00</b></p>                       |
|  | <p><b>MENDELSSOHN—LA FILEUSE (The Spinner)</b><br/><b>LAMOUREUX ORCHESTRA, PARIS</b><br/>ALBERT WOLFF, Conductor</p>  |   |
| <p><b>90139</b></p>  | <p><b>MOZART—IL SERAGLIO—CHE PUR ASPRO AL CORO</b><br/>Soprano Solo Sung in German—In 2 Parts<br/>Orchestra Accompaniment—(J. HEIDRENEICH, Conductor)<br/><b>FELICIE HUNI-MIHACSEK</b></p>  | <p>Recorded in Europe<br/>PRICE <b>\$1.50</b></p>                       |
| <p><b>85000</b></p>  | <p><b>HUGO WOLF—DER TAMBOUR</b><br/>(Wenn Meine Mutter hexen könnt)—(The Drummer)<br/><b>HUGO WOLF—BITEROLF</b><br/>Baritone Solo in German—HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS<br/>Piano Acc. by Franz Rupp</p>   | <p>Recorded in Europe<br/>PRICE <b>\$1.25</b></p>                       |

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## CHORAL



- J. STRAUSS** { **TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS.** Two sides. Sieber  
C-G50279D { Chorus of Berlin with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

To many of us Johann Strauss never wrote a better waltz than the incomparable *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald*. Compared to it, other so-called popular music, with which, by some incomprehensible and grievous error, it is too often associated, seems insufferably trashy and platitudinous. The charming melodies and rhythms of this masterpiece somehow never grow tiresome, no matter how often heard, and it never fails—providing, of course, that it be played with a certain amount of skill—to put in the hearer a pleasurable (and no doubt sinful) glow akin to that obtained otherwise only by certain forbidden beverages. That the public prefers to whistle such banal nonsense as *Happy Days Are Here Again*, or whatever the latest jingle is, perhaps accounts in part for such phenomena as Coolidge, Hoover, Mussolini, prohibition and tabloid newspapers. . . . The arrangement of the piece for chorus and orchestra is not so felicitous as the purely orchestral version, but it makes an acceptable novelty. The disc is thus recommended only to those who know and thoroughly appreciate the latter arrangement. Singing and playing are both excellent; and so is the recording.

## VOCAL



- WOLF** { **BITEROLF.** One side and  
B-85000 { **DER TAMBOUR:** *Wenn Meine Mutter hexen könnt'.* One  
side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone) with piano accompaniment  
by Franz Rupp. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the singing here is superlative. That is expected, nowadays, in a Schlusnus disc. The recording and accompaniment are well done, too. The record was reviewed from the Polydor pressing on page 147 of the June, 1930, issue of *Disques*.

- FRANCK** { **PANIS ANGELICUS.** (Franck) Theodora Versteegh (Mezzo-  
**HANDEL** { Soprano). One side and  
C-50282D { **LARGO (OMBRA MAI FU)** from *Xerxes*. (Handel) One  
side. Jo Van Yzer-Vincent (Soprano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Both of the artists here are well known in Holland. They have attractive voices and sing their numbers with taste and sincerity. The introductory recitative in the Handel number, generally omitted in recordings, is given here. An organ and violin supply the accompaniment for each side.

## Interesting New Victor Releases

---

***Favorite Melodies of Victor Herbert—Volume 2.*** Performed by the Victor Salon Group and Orchestra under direction of Nathaniel Shilkret, on five double-faced Victor Records Nos. 9903-9907 in Album C-11. List price, \$7.50.

The music of Victor Herbert, which has taken such a tremendous hold on the American public, could scarcely fall into more sympathetic hands for interpretation than those of Mr. Shilkret and the artists who assist him. Shilkret's association with Victor Herbert especially qualified him for the work of compiling the music of this well loved composer. Instrumental pieces, excerpts from such musical comedies as *The Only Girl*, *Eileen*, *The Enchantress*—to mention a few—and selections from Herbert's one grand opera, *Natoma*, are arranged with a variety that holds the interest of the listener all the way through. You will also enjoy the first volume of Herbert melodies, Album C-1, which Mr. Shilkret presents in similar attractive manner.

***Cavalleria Rusticana—Opera in One Act, by Mascagni.*** Performed by famous soloists, chorus, and orchestra of La Scala, Milan, under direction of Carlo Sabajno, on nine double-faced Victor Records Nos. 9885-9893. In automatic sequence Nos. 9894-9902. List price, \$13.50. In Album M-98, with explanatory booklet.

This charming opera, which won the composer a prize and brought him recognition at the age of twenty-seven, is presented by members of La Scala with all the tradition for which that company is famous. The lilting *Siciliana*, the melodious *Intermezzo*, Santuzza's singing of *Voi lo sapete*, and the splendid chorus selections, are some of the features which are outstandingly excellent.

***Siegfried Idyll by Wagner.*** Played by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Dr. Karl Muck. On two double-faced Victor Records Nos. 7381-7382. List price, \$2 each.

***Chanson Louis XIII et Pavane*** (Couperin-Kreisler) and

***La Précieuse*** (Couperin-Kreisler)

***Jota*** (Manuel de Falla) and

***Serenade Espagnole*** (Glazounow-Kreisler) Played, with piano accompaniment, by Fritz Kreisler on Victor Records Nos. 1503 and 1504. List price, \$1.50 each.



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**COUPERIN**  
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LA PRECIEUSE. (Couperin-Kreisler) One side. Fritz Kreisler (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Michael Raucheisen. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

**FALLA**  
**GLAZOUNOW**  
V-1504

JOTA. (Manuel de Falla) One side and  
SERENADE ESPAGNOLE. (Glazounow-Kreisler) One side. Fritz Kreisler (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Michael Raucheisen. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Saucily denouncing Kreisler, with many subtle digs as to his musical taste, for his selection of recording material, is one of the most popular pastimes of record reviewers. Even before opening the package containing the records, one begins mentally to speculate upon just the exact, devastating word with which to put the eminent violinist in his proper place. But the time-honored formula, it is pleasant to report, won't do in this case: Kreisler has seen fit to present us with several immensely attractive and unhackneyed little pieces of Couperin's. Couperin hasn't been any too well represented in the record catalogues; the Gramophone Shop's exhaustive *Encyclopedia*, indeed, contains no mention of him in the Index to Composers. Couperin, *Grove's* tells us, is the "name of a family of illustrious French musicians who, from the middle of the 17th century up to the first half of the 19th, have successfully pursued the profession of music." Although not stated on the label, these pieces are probably by François Couperin, born in 1668, who is said to have immortalized the name of Couperin. His influence on Bach has often been commented on. The pieces given here were arranged by Kreisler, who plays them with grace and authority. The disc is highly recommendable, not only for the music, but also for the interpretation given it by Kreisler and Raucheisen and the well-balanced recording. . . . The other disc, giving Falla's well-known *Jota* and a *Serenade Espagnole* of Glazounow, arranged by Kreisler, are pleasant but more in the violinist's usual line. They are, of course, presented with the utmost skill and care.

# ORGAN



**SULLIVAN**  
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THE LOST CHORD. (Sullivan) One side and  
THE MESSIAH: *Hallelujah Chorus*. (Handel) One side. Paul Mania (Organ) with brass choir. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Excellent recording is the outstanding feature here.

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*Debussy: Sonata for Violoncello and Piano. By Gaspar Cassado and Mme. G. von Mendelssohn-Gordigiani. In 3 parts. (4th side—Cassado: Aragonesa).*

*Columbia Record Nos. 67895-D — 67896-D. \$1.50 each.*

**RICHARD STRAUSS** ROSENKAVALIER: WALTZES. The ever-delightful waltzes from *Rosenkavalier* are newly recorded by one of the world's masters of orchestral interpretation. Ravishing music and perfect recording combine to make this a record of pure delight.

*Richard Strauss: Rosenkavalier: Waltzes. By Bruno Walter and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2 parts. Columbia Record No. 67892-D. \$2.00.*

### COLUMBIA OPERATIC SERIES—No. 6

**TOSCA (PUCCINI).** Tosca is at last given a serial recording worthy of its forceful and dramatic measures, making the third of the great Puccini operas to be issued by Columbia. Flawless vocalism by some of Italy's greatest singers and a performance which goes forward with rapt intensity to the final tragedy are some of the distinguishing marks of this issue. No true lover of opera will willingly be without this set.

*Columbia Operatic Series—No. 6*

*Tosca, Opera in Three Acts by Puccini. Recorded in 28 parts by Eminent Artists of Italy, with Chorus of La Scala Theatre and Milan Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Cav. Lorenzo Molajoli. Sung in Italian. In 2 albums. \$21.00 complete.*



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## MISCELLANEOUS



**COWARD**  
V-36034

{ **PRIVATE LIVES:** Act 1—*Love Scene*; Act 2—*Scene*. Two sides. Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

*Private Lives*, by the versatile Noel Coward, recently opened in New York. Once hailed as a genius almost comparable to Shakespeare and Mozart, Mr. Coward seems to be viewed in a more rational light these days, and his work, in consequence, now gets criticism of a better balanced and more penetrating quality. His skill at writing clear, effective, economical dialogue is revealed in this record. George Jean Nathan once wrote: "The dialogue that Mr. Coward writes is nervous and terse, but its nervous terseness is less suggestive of that of life and actuality than of the nervous terseness of moving picture sub-titles." A better example to support Mr. Nathan's contention could hardly be found than that afforded by this disc. Mr. Nathan also spoke of Coward's somewhat excessive straining to "overawe his more susceptible auditors with divers schnitzels of the *beau monde*." This criticism, too, is admirably illustrated by the disc. The first scene given here deals with the meeting of two lovers, who apparently quarrelled in the past, just as they are about to start on their honeymoons with new partners. A few questions, a bit of idle talk, and they quickly realize that their passion is still very much alive. The scene ends with the customary amorous sighs and mutterings. The second scene simply presents a song or so and a few trivial remarks between the two, evidently now married. The author and Gertrude Lawrence give a skilful performance, speaking Mr. Coward's lines convincingly and singing his rather watery tunes engagingly. The recording is realistic. Why doesn't some company try recording one of O'Neill's one-act sea plays?

**GRANADOS**  
**TOURNIER**  
C-2394D

{ **ANDALUZA.** (Granados-Zighéra) One side and  
**VERS LA SOURCE DANS LE BOIS.** (Tournier) One side.  
Bernard Zighéra (Harp). One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Save in the field of jazz and popular music, Columbia doesn't do much recording in this country, but when it does the results are generally extremely interesting and out of the beaten path. Bernard Zighéra is harp soloist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and is reckoned one of the most proficient performers on the instrument in America today. Columbia's enterprise in securing his services for this recording is thus highly laudable, for good harp recordings are not numerous. The first piece given here is an arrangement of Granados' well-known Spanish dance, *Andaluza*. The other is the work of Marcel Tournier, a prominent French harpist, born in Paris in 1879. He is the composer of many pieces for the harp, and also of a two-act ballet. Both are well played and recorded.

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## CORRESPONDENCE



### In Defence of the Interpreter

Editor, *Disques*:

Last Monday evening I read Mr. Winthrop Parkhurst's article, "Exit the Interpreter," in the March *Disques*. Frankly, the article disgusted me . . . Whatever Parkhurst may pretend (or even believe), music *is* a living art which does "require the mediation of flesh-and-blood performers." (Interpreters, if you please.) Music, to Mr. Parkhurst, may be and apparently is merely a succession of tones competently sounded to produce certain acoustic effects, but to men and women of understanding and feeling it is infinitely more—it is the musical expression of the highest and finest thought and feeling and dream of which man is capable; and there *is* a communication of these things from the personality of an artist to the members of his audience which (in the nature of things) no sound recording and reproducing apparatus could be expected to capture and re-create. When Paderewski came on the stage of Symphony Hall in Boston last December, the audience as one man rose and cheered him—not because it was the polite thing to do, but because they instinctively felt they were in the presence of a great man. Can Mr. Parkhurst's phonograph "record" and "reproduce" the living presence of Paderewski and the spell it lays upon mature men and women? yes, even upon seasoned musicians and critical writers whose professional standing quite equals Mr. Parkhurst's. Do you think any man or woman of understanding and feeling would give up Paderewski for a contraption of tubes and gadgets? Or does any sane person suppose that the infinite variety of the human spirit would permit "all possible interpretations" of the world's music to be "recorded in permanent form" in the space of half a century—or of eternity, for that matter? . . .

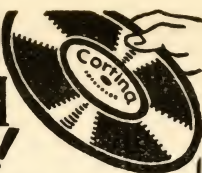
Do you think that the intelligent men and women who love music and the inspiration that comes from personal sight and hearing of fine artists, are going to obey Mr. Parkhurst's dictum and sit content at home before a lifeless, mechanical contraption? (There

was never a more ardent record enthusiast than I have been for nearly twenty years, but when somebody tramples on what you hold sacred it's too much; it's time to protest in no uncertain manner.) Has Mr. Parkhurst never heard of genius, or does he think that in response to his dictum it will in the future wear out its soul in silence or perhaps take to polishing shoes? On the contrary, I assure you, the arts will continue to flourish; reasonable, intelligent people will continue enthusiastically to support them, will continue to go to hear artists interpret fine music (now and again getting a blamed sight more out of a composition than the composer ever put into it); such people will not loll at home "in unbuttoned ease," listening to some record made fifty years ago.

Mr. Parkhurst quite gives himself away when he writes: "When half a dozen of the most distinguished interpretations of Beethoven's opus 111 are available for consumption at your fireside, do you seek out the inconveniences of a concert hall; or do you lean back, twirl a doo-dad and press a button?" Precisely. Mr. Parkhurst and those who think like him (the "radio fan," the "gramophile," etc.) lean back and press a button. But I had supposed *Disques* was edited for intelligent, discriminating music lovers. Such men and women (and there are and always will be enough of them to count) seek out the concert hall and the opera house as often as they can afford—and oftener. (By the way, what are the "inconveniences" of the concert hall? I have never encountered them, though for nearly twenty years I have attended concerts, to my tremendous enjoyment and I believe profit.) . . .

I am not in a joking mood, I assure you, for nothing has so aroused me in a long time as this soulless dissection of a living art in a thoroughly mechanistic, "scientific" manner, as though it were no more than the sum of its technical and tonal parts; but if it were desired to "close on a light note," one might do so by remarking one of the oddities of Mr. Parkhurst's logic. The invention of the phonograph, says he, is comparable to the invention of the printing press. The phonograph, he tells us, is shortly to do away with the interpreter of music. Then, obviously, by the force of Mr. Parkhurst's logic, it becomes

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## Correspondence (Continued)

evident that the invention of the printing press must have done away with speech! . . .

Finally, let me say that I have no connection, direct or indirect, with professional music; but I should consider anyone utterly ungrateful for the tremendous benefits received from music and its interpreters who failed to protest most emphatically against this Parkhurst article.

HAROLD C. BRAINERD

Cambridge, Mass.

### Exit the Mediocre Interpreter

Editor, *Disques*:

Mr. Winthrop Parkhurst, in his article, "Exit the Interpreter," in the March issue of *Disques*, not only lays himself open to the charge of being a poor judge of human nature, but he has foredoomed the ultimate extinction of the phonographic business, which direful calamity was furthest from his "prophetic" thought. His enthusiasm for the phonographic record has so run away with him that he has lost his poise.

No one will deny the boon which the phonograph is to music lovers, and we can agree with Mr. Parkhurst that inevitably there will come such further improvements in recording that the reproductions of the future may be expected to be well-nigh perfect. But this will not do away with the public interpreter, for as long as the world exists human beings will not lose the desire for personal contact. Why does one go to hear a public lecturer, when in all probability all that he has to say may be read in his published books? Why does the Little Theatre movement increasingly flourish when the plays may be read or perhaps seen and heard in the "talkies?" It is personal contact with the flesh-and-blood speaker or actor which is of far greater human interest than the mere written word or mechanical reproduction.

I am very much of a phonograph fan myself, and, if I could afford it, would have all the best records in my possession. But the more I listen to records, the more I want to hear the real performance.

During the year of the Beethoven Centenary I secured a hall and the best new orthophonic machine obtainable, and invited the

public to come and listen to some of the greatest of Beethoven's compositions, including the Ninth Symphony. What was the result? A mere handful of people showed up. They were not interested in a "canned" performance. Listening to this record of the Ninth Symphony did not hinder me from making a trip of 400 miles to hear a real performance of the work.

If performing musicians are being largely replaced by canned music, the phonograph itself has a formidable rival in the radio. But, like the phonograph, the radio lacks personal contact, and neither will this medium eliminate the public interpreter. A short time ago, an enterprising radio dealer in my city secured a large hall and invited the public to a radio concert by a celebrated orchestra. I suppose a hundred people, at the most, were present; but if that celebrated orchestra itself, with its magnetic conductor, had come to town, it is safe to say thousands would have been present. Now, a chain radio performance, with static eliminated, is admittedly more satisfactory than a phonograph record, but its appeal is insufficient to draw an audience. It is all very well for the home, as is the phonograph, but people will not go to hear machine produced music in a concert hall. They want to see and be in close touch with the performers.

There is another thought coming to Mr. Parkhurst in the matter of extinction of the interpreter: If for no other purpose than to keep the radio business alive, there must be interpreters, and signs are not wanting that the interpreter demand is booming as popularity of the radio increases. And this vast army of interpreters, again according to the impulses of human nature, is not going to be content to hide its light in the radio studio, but will want to get out before the public, and the public on its part will want to see and hear in the flesh.

In my city of half a million inhabitants, we have several chamber music organizations. According to Mr. Parkhurst's theory, this is absurd, when practically all the music they play may be heard on the phonograph. But the public in increasing numbers patronizes these chamber music concerts—why? Because the public is being musically educated by the phonograph and the radio, and the taste for good music is growing.

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## Correspondence (Continued)

Another fallacy in Mr. Parkhurst's "prophecy" is this: People who heard such great conductors as Richter and Muck, etc., want to hear the great men of today, such as Toscanini, Verbruggen, and others, and they will *always* want to hear new geniuses. Toscanini does not interpret like Richter, and future great conductors will interpret differently to both Richter and Toscanini. It is individuality the world wants, and the phonograph is not going to cause the exit of individuality.

If, according to Mr. Parkhurst, all the music of all times is to be interpreted and recorded by the year 2000 A. D., or earlier, and "the end of the interpreter's day will seem meet and natural," then, it is very evident, the end of the phonographic business (not to mention radio) will also be meet and natural, for people will have bought and tired of the existing records, and the making of new ones will be impossible, interpreters having made their "exit." It will also be the end of musical art, as there will be no one to produce new works. Perhaps Mr. Parkhurst's most absurd statement is: "volunteers will doubtless arise to take care of" the new music "worthy of being interpreted." They "would spring to the colors in an emergency after a small body of first-rate compositions had at last accumulated." What kind of amateur performers are these going to be who have had no opportunities except the listening to canned singing and playing, and no training, because artists who could have trained them became extinct in the 20th century? Mr. Parkhurst must be reckoning upon these valiant amateur saviors of the "small body of first-rate compositions" being trained by canned piano, fiddle and voice lessons.

By all means let us have more and better phonograph records, as well as better radio music, and in time the civilized world will have become so music-minded that standing-room-only will be the condition of all good concerts—but only *good* concerts will be tolerated, for the public will have become musically wise. The phonograph and radio are educating the public at home, and creating greater and greater opportunities for the artist on the concert platform. It is only the mediocre interpreter who is making his exit.

FERDINAND DUNKLEY

New Orleans, La.

## Some Nervous Agreement

Editor, *Disques*:

I relish the salty flavor of truth in your article on "Manufacturing Music Lovers" and yet it seems to me excessive in its attempt to cool hot hopefulness regarding recorded music as a producer of music lovers. Although it seems true (you call it axiomatic) that the germ of music loving has to be born in one, the awakening in potential music lovers of a knowledge that they possess music loving potentialities has so strong a resemblance to "manufacture" of music lovers, that the mistake (if any) of so regarding it seems fairly justifiable. Just how the germ-containing sheep are to be distinguished from the germless goats may be an unsettled question, and the hot enthusiast may occasionally have the virtue of revealing as a sheep what the less untiring dogmatist would class as a goat and let go at that (no pun intended).

There is always some danger of growing too severely intellectual about music. I wonder that you use the term "music lover" at all. "Lover" is a rather sticky and sentimental word. Two states of mind in potential music lovers occur to me as possible hindrances to their becoming actual instead of mere potential lovers. One is their modest thought that they may not be of the inborn elect. The other is a state of fear about using such a "short cut to culture" as recorded music, either because such use may seem as sinful as looking at answers at the back of a text book, or because they may regard themselves as victims of some sort of fraud in being made to think of it as a short cut. Now such a fear of fraud would be a pitiable thing, for in all candid truth (when you come to think of it rightly, sanely and without any snooty prejudices) recorded music is a genuine short cut to a very enriching part of culture, even though it may not lead to all there is to know and feel about music. But what cultural proceeding, mechanical, institutional or individual can accomplish completeness of musical knowledge or understanding?

Really I am in substantial agreement with your article. These words are merely nervous expressions of self-doubt as to whether the completeness of my agreement is thoroughly well based.

ADOLPH SCHMUCK

Indianapolis, Ind.



# BOOKS

DISCORDS MINGLED: *Essays on Music*. By Carl Engel. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.50.

This book was published, according to an introductory note, at the suggestion—a very wise and sound one, as the reader of these papers will readily agree—of the late O. G. Sonneck, to whom the volume is dedicated. Sonneck, before his death, was editor of the *Musical Quarterly* and chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress; these posts are now occupied by Mr. Engel. The essays, lectures and reviews reprinted here deal with a variety of subjects: Schubert's fame, the Beethoven week in Vienna during the recent centennial, "Home, Sweet Home," Mozart, Wagner, Schönberg, the dance, jazz, Beethoven's illness, indecency in music, and others. Thus Mr. Engel contrives to engage the interest of a variety of readers.

The account of the Beethoven week in Vienna, written in diary form, is amusingly told, and Mr. Engel, it is plain, did not swallow all of the ceremonies without a grain of salt. The chapter on "Home, Sweet Home" contains a good deal of interesting information on this venerable tune. Mozart as a husband is another subject which Mr. Engel handles well; and he is particularly generous with the composer's wife, who has often been subjected to rather bitter condemnations. As for Wagner, the author concludes thus: "No person who today is less than forty years of age can possibly feel toward Wagner's music as those of us who first encountered it not later than at the end of the nineteenth century. Then it was at the height of its glory. It had conquered all opposition. It still retained something of its formidable novelty. The performances of Wagner's later operas had reached a splendor unknown to Wagner himself. . . . Those of us who between 1890 and 1900 heard for the first time *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger*, and the *Ring*, are the last beings on this earth who will have experienced the impact with the full force of Wagner's genius."

The chapter on Beethoven's illness is written in reply to Ernest Newman's *The Unconscious Beethoven*, and in it Mr. Engel subjects the essay to a minute and devastating analysis. "If 'an essay in musical psy-

chology,'" he concludes, "is merely another name for fiction, we must hail Mr. Newman's book as an extremely well-written, gripping tale. . . . If we took a pessimistic view, we might easily say that the world one hundred years ago killed Beethoven, the man, by not giving him enough; and that in the course of the centennial year it did its best to kill the composer by giving too much of him."

THE MUSICAL DRAMAS OF RICHARD WAGNER. By Paul H. Grumann. Lincoln, Neb.: *The University of Nebraska*. 50c.

Mr. Grumann, who is professor of dramatic literature and director of the School of Fine Arts of the University of Nebraska, concerns himself chiefly with the value of Wagner's works as dramatic literature. In his opening chapter, "The Art of Richard Wagner," he discusses the composer's methods, the historical aspects of his works and finishes by stating "It is quite safe to say, however, that Wagner's dramas are the most artistic expression of pessimism, profoundly impressing even to those who have been converted to the optimism of Browning, Ibsen, Hauptmann, and Nietzsche." The most important thing, the music, receives scant consideration; certain passages are referred to as being "spirited," "weird" or something of the sort, but that is about as far as the author gets. His spelling, too, is a bit disconcerting. On page 3, for example, we have the word "thoroughly" spelled "thoroly," while on the very next page we get back to "thoroughly." Again, on pages 21 and 24 we return to "thoroly," but on page 27 "thoroughly" is employed. There is nothing new in the book, which seems to be addressed to college students, and the author is guilty of some highly dubious statements. Thus on page 27 we are assured that "In spite of the fact that Isolde is married to King Mark, she has clandestine meetings with Tristan in a grove. . . ." There is nothing in Wagner's text to indicate that King Mark and Isolde were really married, nor is there any indication that they held more than one "clandestine meeting," which was, of course, the disastrous one.





